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AUTHOR	Fair, Kristi
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ABSTRACT

This two volume document investigates the policies and processes that result in learners failing or passing in grades 1-3 in Ondangwa and Rundu education regions of Namibia. The first volume is a synthesis of the research, while volume two presents the "raw" data provided to help ground the reader in real life school settings. Ondangwa and Rundu were selected because the number and percentages of learners failing are highest in these regions and because there seemed to be little relationship between school inputs and pass rates. The research was qualitative and consisted of interviews with Regional Office personnel, principals, teachers, parents, and learners; an examination of school and Ministry documents; and classroom observations. The sample included six schools in each region for a total of twelve schools, which were subdivided according to pass rates of students. Recommendations highlight areas that required attention and suggested ways of bringing pass/fail practices in line with Ministry policy. Recommendations are made in the areas of communication; policy-making; document and materials' distribution, revision and production; and training. (EH)

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Passing and Failing Learners:
Policies and Practices in Ondangwa and Rundu
in Grades 1 to 3

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VOLUME I

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Kristi Fair

for the
Ministry of Education and Culture
and UNICEF

with support from UNICEF
and the MEC/Florida State University Project

22 September 1994

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CONTENTS

VOLUME I

Foreword iii

Acknowledgements vii

Acronyms and Abbreviations viii

Executive Summary ix

1. Rationale 1

2. Methodology 3

3. MEC Assessment and Promotion Guidance 9

    - Availability
    - Comprehensibility
    - Actual Assessment and Promotion Practices in 12 Schools

4. Factors in Pass/Fail 38

5. Recommendations 51

6. Literature Review 54

References 62

VOLUME II

Twelves Case Study Reports

FOREWORD

The research reported in this document is part of a larger research effort of the Directorate of Planning and Development aimed at trying to understand why so many learners in Grades 1 to 3 fail. This study answers the question "What processes and policies in schools lead to failure?" It grows out of an analysis of the relationships between school inputs and pass rates, addressing the question "What school factors are related to failure rates?" Both of these efforts are complemented by a third piece that uses Grade 4 and 7 learner performance from the National Learner Baseline Assessment to try to answer the question "Is failure related to a lack of achievement?" The assistance of Bruce Fuller and Haiyan Hua of Harvard University in two of these analyses deserves mention.

WHY STUDY FAILURE?

The issue of failure is compelling on a number of grounds. The extent of the problem was the first characteristic that called our attention to the issue. The regions of Ondangwa East, Ondangwa West and Rundu make up 67% of all schools offering Grades 1 to 3 and 144 609 or 70% of the Grade 1 to 3 learners in the country. In 1993, the pass rate for Grades 1 to 3 across these three regions was 65%. This means that 46 456 learners failed. The pass rate was lowest in Grade 1, being 58% for all three regions.

Second, the costs of failure, borne by the Ministry, Namibian society, children and their families, makes addressing the issue of failure obligatory, especially from an efficiency point of view. When children fail they repeat or drop out. In 1993, there were 85 179 repeaters in primary grades, costing over N$ 120 million or 12,5% of the MEC budget. Repeaters swell classes and make teaching and learning more difficult. Resources allocated to repeaters cannot be used to provide access to children with no opportunity for schooling.

A third concern, linked to equity and social costs, is that with high failure rates we risk parental disenchantment as parents become reluctant to do without the labour of their children who enrol in the same grade repeatedly. There are long term psychological costs of children learning that they can only fail but never succeed.

A fourth characteristic is how little the pass rate pattern has changed over time. The high failure rates referred to above are not post-Independence phenomena. A final factor urging us on in this study was that the high failure rate seemed to be at odds with the philosophy of Namibia's basic education reform which asserts that all children can learn. Was it possible that the system was failing the child?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study of policies and practices by which learners are passed or failed is not intended as an evaluation of reform in Grades 1 to 3. That would be premature as the Ministry plans to implement curricular and other reforms in these grades only starting in January 1996. Rather it was expected that this study could inform those plans for reform.

The findings from this study call into question the assumptions many of us have regarding how things operate in our schools and what really matters. In particular, the study questions the influence of inputs such as class size and attendance on the pass/fail decision as well as the relationship between the pass/fail decision and achievement. We realise that this makes some people uncomfortable and others have difficulty accepting that their assumptions may not hold but, we contend, it is important and, as it turns out, revealing, to do so.

The situations described in this report ring true for many of us—there is something familiar in the attitudes expressed and in the actions observed. "We know all this" some readers may even respond. But we did not know how these attitudes and practices, these policies and misunderstandings affect the futures of real, live children. A very important contribution of the study is in linking, in a clearly causal direction, the policies and practices which ring so true to the outcomes of passing and failing learners.

The practical problems described in this report are keeping factors we expect to matter from having an effect on pass/fail. We uncover evidence that pass/fail and achievement are not necessarily linked: children are being passed or failed for reasons other than their performance. The findings are a warning that while increasing resources to the Ondangwa and Rundu regions is essential, unless we attend to the policies and practices described here, these problems will continue to override the effect of conventional inputs.

USE OF THE FINDINGS

In examining in depth a small sample of schools in Ondangwa and Rundu, it must be recognised that the findings do not necessarily apply throughout the country. It may be that the practices documented within this report do not exist in other regions. Nonetheless, the schools chosen for in-depth study are not extreme cases for the regions they do represent. These schools are not among those most distant from urban areas and probably do not represent the worst cases. The sampling typology tells us that they have a mix of inputs and outputs. It must also be stressed that the regions which these schools do represent account for the vast majority of the schools and learners at these grades. To dismiss the findings as not nationally representative is to miss the point of the research.

This study offers a number of lessons for the future implementation of lower primary reform. It is essential that we base interventions on actual practices and levels of understanding and this study documents some of these practices and understandings. Clearly, the introduction of basic competencies alone will not solve the problems described here. Without clear thinking from Head and Regional offices on the implementation of basic competencies and the related assessment issues, little progress will be made.

The recommendations in this report are of varying degrees of difficulty. Some are relatively easy to implement but others, such as changing the culture of failure, will take a long time to change. Nonetheless, we hope this research report will be received in the spirit in which the work was undertaken—with the belief that we can make a positive difference to the lives of Namibia's children.

Sue Grant Lewis
John Mendelsohn

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research assistance of the teams in Ondangwa and Rundu was essential to the study. The contribution of the Research Assistants goes far beyond translation and their assistance is gratefully acknowledged by the Lead Researcher.

In Ondangwa region:	In Rundu region:
Nangula Lameck (Supervisor)	Peter Kamwanga (Supervisor)
Esther Akwaake	Lucas Munango
Sirkka Namutewa	Naomi Muyeu

The study would not have been possible without the cooperation of the 12 schools visited. The Principals, teachers, learners and parents who spoke with the research team have added a wider understanding of the policies and practices operating in schools that affect promotion practices. I do not thank these interviewees by name in order to protect their anonymity.

The study also benefitted from the candid discussions held with Regional and Circuit Office personnel and from their help in arranging guides and introductions to the schools.

A number of people at the Head Office of the MEC have assisted in the study. A series of meetings with officials provided views on the factors and processes that affect promotion in the schools. I wish to thank the directorates of Planning and Development, NIED, Examinations, and Educational Programme Implementation. I thank the Director of Planning, Mr. M. J. Mukendwa, and the EMIS Chief, Mr. Friedhelm Voigts, for their support. This research developed from statistical analyses conducted in the EMIS Division by John Mendelsohn and Suzanne Grant Lewis. John and Sue also provided invaluable input into the analysis of the data, the presentation of the results, and the editing of the document. However, the responsibility for any inaccuracies in the report is mine.

The study is indebted to both UNICEF and the MEC/Florida State University Project for input into the study design, the funding of the study and the production of the draft and final reports.

Without the commitment of the Honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Nahas Angula, and his courage to examine sensitive issues, this study would not have been undertaken.

Kristi Fair

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Continuous Assessment
ECP	Education Certificate Primary
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HOD	Head of Department
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
SES	Socio-economic Status

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RATIONALE

This study was planned to investigate the policies and processes that result in learners failing or passing in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in Ondangwa and Rundu education regions. Failure rates are considered problematic because of the high social and personal costs of failure. Ondangwa and Rundu were selected as sites for the study because the number and percentages of learners failing are highest in these regions, and because there seemed to be little relationship between school inputs and pass rates. Little is known empirically of how and why learners fail in the schools—the decision-making process has been a mystery and our assumptions have coloured what we see. For example, it has been widely assumed that the pass/fail decision is directly related to learner achievement. This study has acknowledged the possibility that this link may not exist. The literature on the various meanings of failure and factors contributing to failure suggested that we examine a constellation of factors, from the institutional to the interpersonal, operating in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and in schools.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to gather data on perceived and actual factors in determining pass/fail. The approach was qualitative, meaning that the concentration was not on expressing findings through numbers, but on describing processes and interactions in words. The sources of data were interviews with Regional Office personnel, Principals, teachers, parents, and learners; school and Ministry documents; and classroom observations. During the design of the study numerous consultations with colleagues in the Head and Regional offices were held between April and June of this year.

The sample included six schools in each region for a total of twelve schools. Four types of schools were selected: those with high pass rates, those with low pass rates, those which had great changes in pass rates in one grade from one year to the next, and those with large differences in pass rates between Grades 1, 2 and 3 in a particular year.

Each school was visited by the Lead Researcher and a team of three Namibian research assistants. There was a different team of Namibians for each region, with all the research assistants speaking the languages of the people interviewed.

CASE STUDY REPORTS FROM ONDANGWA AND RUNDU

The interactions and processes determining pass/fail at each school are described in analytical categories, including:

- perceptions of why learners fail
- who is seen as responsible for failure
- parent and learner characteristics and their influence on failure
- the quality of the educational experience and the relationship between what is taught and what is assessed
- understandings and implementation of promotion policies

ASSESSMENT AND PROMOTION GUIDANCE FROM THE MEC

The assessment and promotion guidance offered in NIED Exams circulars, syllabi and the Curriculum Guide is found to be largely unavailable in schools, incomprehensible to many intended users of the documents, and misunderstood and not implemented by Principals and teachers. The Curriculum Guide is not supposed to be in schools but it is in Regional Offices and there is confusion surrounding its implementation. Partly as a result of these problems with the documents, the actual assessment and promotion practices in schools are idiosyncratic and not in line with intended policy. Realising the nature of existing practices and levels of understanding is very important as the Ministry embarks on reform in Grades 1 to 3 from January 1996.

FACTORS IN PASS/FAIL: WHY ARE LEARNERS FAILED?

This section summarises the previous two sections, discussing factors in pass/fail decision-making. The perceptions of interviewees are compared with other data collected, including documents, to determine the role of particular factors in deciding pass/fail. Factors that currently have an uncertain effect on pass/fail rates include:

- learner age
- learner and teacher absenteeism
- teacher dedication

Factors that seem to have a positive or negative effect on the pass rate are:

- parents' support of learners
- teaching methodology
- the relationship between what is taught and assessed
- the method and accuracy of determining pass/fail decision
- the level of understanding and use of Ministry documents
- the accuracy of the information on Exam Schedules

At present the situation argues against all conventional wisdom. Factors expected to play a major role do not have much influence. Learner absenteeism, for example, does not seem to matter because teachers' problems with the arithmetic calculation of subject marks plays a far more influential role. Once the link between what is taught and what is assessed is strengthened and once the assessment and promotion guidance is clearly understood and teachers are trained to implement it, the factors we expect to matter are likely to start influencing pass/fail decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations highlight areas needing attention and suggests ways of bringing pass/fail practices in line with Ministry policy. Recommendations are made in the following areas: communication; policy-making; documents and materials distribution, revision and production; and training. Recommendations are as follows:

Communication

1. Improve communication within the Head Office, and between the Head Office and the Regional Offices, regarding:

- policies made
- usefulness of documents and circulars
- dissemination and use of documents
- reasons for non-implementation

2. Increase Regional Office contact with remote schools in:

- implementation of policies
- training needs
- feedback on problems

Policy

1. Continuous Assessment:

- Clarify that CA has been the policy for many years.
- Develop a common definition of CA.
- Be clear on the rationale for CA.
- Decide how CA is to be implemented, given available human and other resources.

2. Be sure what is happening in schools informs promotion policy changes.
3. Consider the costs of the policy of allowing repetition only once per grade and once per phase in Grades 1 to 3.
4. Evaluate the costs of rationalization to regional operations.
5. Re-evaluate the value and objectives of inspection services as they now operate.

Documents and Materials

Distribution

1. Distribute current syllabi to schools.
2. Take current NIED Exams circulars to schools.
3. Deliver new Exams circulars at the beginning of the year (not in August).

Revision

1. Revise syllabi or add basic competencies to old syllabi before new syllabi are available.
2. Revise Exams Schedules for each grade to make clear how to determine pass/fail using only the promotion subjects.
3. Include on Exams Schedules an explanation of the pass requirements.
4. Use clear language in NIED Exams Circulars.
5. 'Pretest' all Circulars in schools to find out what is difficult to understand.
6. Revise Circulars before finalising and distributing them.

Production

1. Adapt or produce understandable, clear, practical guides to asssssment.
2. Produce syllabi that can be used with texts currently used (or new texts) in the schools.

Training

Basic Competencies

1. Help teachers, Principals, and Regional Office personnel understand current syllabi and basic competencies.
2. Standardise basic competencies in schools.

Continuous Assessment

3. Train Principals, teachers and Regional Office personnel in how to do CA.
4. Have workshops to monitor CA and to assist schools.

Teaching Methodology

5. Train Principals and teachers in teaching methodology.
6. Train Principals and teachers in the connection between teaching and assessment.

Change the Culture of Failure

7. Change the culture/norms of failure in schools to reduce failure.

8. Educate Principals, teachers, and parents on the factors contributing to failure, including absenteeism.
9. Explain to educators the various costs of failure and why failure should be reduced.
10. Discuss acceptable means of raising the pass rate.

Implementation and Revision of Promotion Policies

11. Train Principals and teachers at schools in implementing NIED Exams circulars. (averages, how to decide symbols...)
12. Use feedback from workshops to revise documents.
13. Train Inspectors to monitor promotion policies.

1. RATIONALE

THE PROBLEM AND COSTS OF FAILURE

Particularly in the north, large numbers and high percentages of learners fail in the first three grades of school. The costs of failure to individuals and society are high, with failure leading to either repetition or dropout. Among the costs of failure that can be measured in money terms are the Ministry expenditures on repeaters (who may take, for example, 15 or 16 or more years instead of 12 years to get through the system); and the direct costs to families (including school fund and supplies). Other costs of failure include the psycho-social costs to learners and their families, such as, perhaps, a negative attitude toward schooling and the stigma attached to failure; and the costs to teachers and learners of working in classrooms that are overcrowded because of repeaters. This list of costs is far from complete.

Improving the internal efficiency of the system is one of the Grand Goals of basic education reform. Failure is a major factor in the inefficiency of the primary school phase. It is realized that in order to improve the pass rates, the reasons for failure must be understood. Policies intended to bring about attitudinal, behavioural, and structural changes must be informed by the rationale and circumstances that shape the pass/fail decision processes presently.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This study of failure in Grades 1 - 3 developed from an analysis of MEC data on pass rates in the schools. Two findings from an analysis of Annual Education Census data indicated a need for the failure study. First, the data showed only weak or no relationships between measured school inputs (including Principal and teacher qualification and experience, and various measures of physical inputs), and pass rates. In other words, while we expected schools with qualified, experienced teachers and quality resources to have high pass rates, that was not the case. Second, there was great variation in pass rates between schools in the same communities in Ondangwa and Rundu. The central question of the study is: why do learners pass or fail in Grades 1 to 3?

The hypothesis for the failure study was that individual schools' norms and processes significantly shape the decision whether to pass or fail a learner, and that these processes would be observable through qualitative study. The qualitative study was designed to give researchers a few days in each school to investigate how the attitudes and beliefs of the Principal, teachers, parents and learners shaped the processes of assessment, producing high pass rates in some schools and low pass rates in others. Other contributing factors, such as the influence of the Regional Office personnel, were also to be investigated.

In Grades 1 to 3, there is no objective measure of learner achievement. Curriculum reform has yet to take place in these grades and the syllabi currently in use do not provide basic competencies. Nor is there a national test given in these grades. The researchers did try to get an idea of different levels of achievement within and between schools by asking learners to write or read words or do sums; and by asking teachers what they expected learners to be able to do in order to pass each Grade. The intent of these questions was to collect information about whether there were similarities between expected performance or achievement across schools.

2. METHODOLOGY

QUANTITATIVE DATA INSPIRING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Quantitative studies ask why things happen. They try to measure the extent or distribution of something, using numbers. Quantitative studies can be useful in making generalizations about what is happening on the whole, and in trying to measure the relative strength of various factors.

Quantitative work on the factors influencing failure rates in Grades 1 - 3 indicated a need for this qualitative study of the problem. The correlations between various school inputs (teacher qualification and experience, class size, traditional/permanent structures, and so on) and pass rates were non-existent or very weak. In other words, in some cases, qualified teachers pass many learners, and in other cases, qualified teachers pass few learners. Results suggest idiosyncratic factors and processes are operating in different schools.

A study of the processes by which learners are passed and failed was needed. This qualitative study uses words to give detailed descriptions of processes, events and interactions and to express the perspectives of different people on the same issue. The direct speech of people interviewed is useful in understanding the process of deciding pass/fail in schools. In the study, numbers are also used in comparing pass rates across schools and years.

ISSUES IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Among the issues of concern in a qualitative study are internal and external validity, reliability and ethics. Internal validity has to do with how accurate the study is in its description of reality. Ways to ensure internal validity include triangulation, or gathering data on the same question from different sources. For example, in this study, to get information about how teachers determine pass/fail, the researchers asked teachers to tell us how they do it, then to show us their Exam Schedules and evaluation books so that we could see whether the procedure they described is actually the one they use. Another example is the question of how teachers assess learners. We asked teachers to tell us what they do, to show us test books if they keep them, and we often asked learners how they were assessed in class. Triangulation is a useful way to check the accuracy of information given and to show the different perspectives people have on issues.

A second way to ensure internal validity is to check with the people interviewed to be sure we understood them correctly. Particularly because most of the interviewees spoke in either Rukwangali, Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga and research assistants translated their words into English, there was potential for misunderstanding. Often, we would ask questions in more than one way, or repeat what we thought the interviewee had said in order to be sure we were interpreting correctly. A third way of checking internal validity used in this study was to explain some of the results from the schools to people in the Regional or Circuit Offices. They often confirmed what we were hearing in the field -- such as the fact that Inspectors rarely visit some schools, and that they stop in only briefly to deliver or collect things.

Another issue in qualitative research is reliability, or the dependability of the findings. This issue has to do with the completeness of the record-keeping in the study, including the explanation of how the data were collected, in order that people reading the study might understand the process.

The question of external validity, or the degree to which the findings of the study are generalizable to other schools, is another issue. In quantitative studies, this issue is addressed by choosing an acceptably large sample (or selection from the whole population of schools). The same method of addressing external validity is not used in qualitative studies, in which the primary concern is not generalizability, but the accurate depiction of processes and interactions in those schools in the sample. A large number of schools is not key, though in this case, a variety of schools was sampled (see the section on sample selection for further discussion.)

This issue of external validity is not easy to settle. In fact, to a great degree, it is unanswerable. The research team went to six schools in Ondangwa and six schools in Rundu. At each school, the process for determining passing and failing is particular to that school, even though there are common elements among the schools. We do not know whether there are many schools that have similar policies and processes as do the schools in the study. A good substitute for external validity are the opinions of the Head Office and Regional Office officials, and of the Principals and teachers who might read the report or hear its findings. If these case study findings are consistent with the collective experience of the people who work in and with schools, then in a qualitative sense, external validity is satisfied. Yet another way to test external validity is to explore whether the study's results make sense or are congruent with other research results.

Finally, there is the question of ethics in data collection, writing-up, and dissemination. In the letter sent to Principals to ask whether we might visit their schools, it was said that the research team came to observe, not to intervene in school practices. However, in the data-collection process, it is difficult not to intervene. One instance of the dilemma over whether to intervene was in a class observation in which we saw a teacher beating learners with a metre stick. We decided that to object to the teacher's actions would compromise the purpose of our visit, which required her cooperation and openness about assessment procedures.

Schools were promised anonymity in the writing-up of the report. It was essential to have schools' confidence that there would be no negative consequences to their talking with us about what happens at the school, and about their relationship with the Inspector and the Regional Office. To protect anonymity, schools are not named, and the names of people interviewed at the schools and in the Regional Offices have been changed.

EARLY STUDY DESIGN

Initial work in the design of the study was done in Ondangwa, where John Mendelsohn and Suzanne Grant Lewis (of the EMIS Division of the Ministry), and the Lead Researcher collected information from Regional Office officials, participants in a workshop for Inspectors and Principals, and Principals and teachers at two schools, to explore the broad question of why learners fail. In these interviews, we began to develop components to be investigated (such as beliefs about what causes failure or how assessment happens in the classroom). We also started practicing ways of asking understandable questions that would draw out the kind of information we were seeking. In addition meetings were held with Head Office officials in order to inform them of the study, to get their input on the research question and to gather background information and documents.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

There were two teams of three research assistants, one for Ondangwa and one for Rundu. All the research assistants are from either Ondangwa or Rundu, speak the languages spoken by the interviewees, and had previous research experience (including work on the National Population Census, work for NBC, and for the Social Sciences Division of the University).

In qualitative research, along with the instruments for collecting data, such as a set of questions to guide discussion, the researchers and fieldworkers are also instruments. Human instruments can be refined and improved, and that process happened in each region. As each research team worked together in the schools, collecting data, learning the best ways to ask questions, and using what we learned from one school to guide us at the next school, our results became more focussed and detailed.

SELECTION OF SCHOOLS

Using MEC data on school inputs, we chose 12 schools whose pass rates for three years, 1991 - 1993, were not as expected. The following table presents the sample selected. These schools were expected to help explain why the statistical analysis found little relationship between, for instance, high quality school inputs and high pass rates.

None of the schools was in an urban center, and most of the schools were some distance from main roads. In Ondangwa region, the furthest school from Oshakati was about 70 kilometers away, and in Rundu region, the furthest school was about 100 kilometers from Rundu.

PASS RATES 1991-1993	Number of schools of each type	
	ONDANGWA	RUNDU
generally HIGH	2 schools 70 - 85%	1 school 80 - 100%
generally LOW	1 school 38 - 58%	1 school 47 - 66%
great change in one Grade from one year to the next	1 school 1992 1993 55% 100%	2 schools 1992 1993 39% 100%
large differences in pass rates between Grades 1, 2 and 3 in a particular year	2 schools Grade 1 34% Grade 3 60%	2 schools Grade 1 28% Grade 3 91%

DATA SOURCES

We collected data from a number of sources including schools, the Regional/Circuit offices, and Head Office.

Document Analysis

School Level

- Teacher and Learner Attendance records
- Teacher Schemes of Work and Daily Preparation books
- Teacher Test books
- Assessment records
  - Continuous Assessment records
  - Exams Schedules (end 1993; Term 1, 1994)

Head Office Level

- NIED Exams Circulars
- Curriculum Guide

Classroom Observations

School Level

- Home Language
- English
- Maths
- Handwriting

Interviews

School Level

- Principal
- Teachers from Grades 1 - 3
- Learners (one expected to pass, one expected to fail, from each of the three Grades for a total of 6 learners)
- Parents (of each learner interviewed)

Regional/Circuit Office Level

- Chief Inspectors
- Inspectors
- Subject Advisors

At the Regional Offices and one Circuit Office, we interviewed Chief Inspectors, Inspectors, Subject Advisors, and others, about the nature of the study, expected findings, and the validity of the findings.

THE QUESTION GUIDE

The question guide is not called a questionnaire because it is a flexible instrument, a list of questions used to guide discussion. The guide was continually modified throughout the study, different in every interview, and not exhaustive. We added or deleted questions in each interview as appropriate. For example, we asked Principals and teachers whether their children had ever failed a Grade. Only if the teacher said yes did we ask questions about why the child failed, and other follow-up questions.

While the exact questions asked differed in each interview, the intent was the same: to understand the interviewee's thoughts and beliefs about how pass/fail is decided, about whether failure is an acceptable and necessary part of the system, about who is responsible for failure, and so on.

THE PROCEDURE AT SCHOOLS

The order of events differed at each school, depending on circumstances, but in general, the data-collection procedure included these elements. Two to three days were spent at each school. On the first day, the research team met the Principal, found out whether he or she had received the letter (sent through the Regional Office) explaining the study, and answered questions. Usually, we interviewed the Principal the first day and often asked follow-up questions the second day. We met with teachers to explain the study and to assure them we were studying how assessment happens in the school, not evaluating them as teachers.

Also on the first day, the research team observed classes (some combination of Home Language, Maths, Handwriting, and English). The first three subjects were chosen because they are the promotion subjects in Grades 1 - 3, and English was chosen because it was (until recently) a promotion subject in Grade 3. The research team divided into two groups, with two of us watching each class. We made observations about the teaching and assessment methods used by teachers, general class condition and atmosphere. Each pair of researchers compared notes.

One teacher from each of the three Grades was asked to choose one learner expected to pass and one expected to fail (for a total of six learners). After school the first day, we interviewed these learners. Usually interviews were done by two members of the research team, with one or both people asking questions and taking notes. Learners were asked to invite their parents to come to school to talk with us the following morning. Sometimes the Principal sent a note with each learner. Before we left the school the first day, we collected as many of the documents as possible from the teachers. In the evening, the Lead Researcher analyzed the documents and formulated additional questions to ask teachers, based on their record books.

The second day, the research team interviewed parents in the morning. After classes had finished, we interviewed teachers from the three Grades.

3. MEC ASSESSMENT AND PROMOTION GUIDANCE

Existing documents to guide MEC officials, Principals and teachers in assessment and promotion include the following:

- *Syllabi* (for all the subjects)
- *Curriculum Guide for Formal Basic Education, Version 8* (November, 1992)
- *NIED 42/93*
  (Replaced by NIED 3/94 in Term 2 of 1994)
- *NIED 3/94: Requirements for Promotion in 1994, Grades 1 - 12*

These documents, which together are the guidance for assessment and promotion, will be discussed in terms of:

- Availability in the schools visited
- Comprehensibility
- Actual assessment and promotion practices

AVAILABILITY

The following table lists which documents are available (but not necessarily in use) at each school. "Old Exams Circulars" refers to Exams Circulars prior to NIED 42/93. "Unknown" means we have no data on whether the school has that document. "?" means that the Principal said he/she has the document, but was unable to find it to show it to us. "Yes" means that the research team saw the document. "No" means the Principal said that the school does not have the document.

SCHOOL	SYLLABI	BASIC CUR	old Exams Circulars	NIED 42/93	NIED 3/94
1	none	no	unknown	unknown	? (could not find)
2	one (DNE English)	no	1/84	? (could not find)	no
3	none	no	1991	no	no
4	none	no	unknown	unknown	unknown
5	none	no	unknown	? (could not find)	no
6	none	no	unknown	? (could not find)	no
7	none	no	yes	yes	yes
8	none	no	unknown	? (could not find)	no
9	none	no	unknown	yes	no
10	two (Maths, English)	no	unknown	yes	no
11	none	no	14/92	no	no
12	none	no	yes	no	no
TOTAL: schools that have document	2	0	5 yes	3 yes 5 ?	1 yes 1 ?

Only two schools had copies of any syllabi, and each of these schools had only one or two syllabi. At school number 2, the syllabus for English was outdated (the school did not have the new English syllabus). At school number 10, both syllabi were current. The rest of the schools had no syllabi at all, but rather use whatever textbooks they have, or old Schemes of Work (dating from the early 1930's in many cases), to guide teaching.

At this point in time, according to an Examinations Directorate official, schools do not have copies of the Curriculum Guide and it is not supposed to be in schools at this time.

Three of the five schools that have older Exams Circulars are using them (from 1991 and 1992). The other schools have more recent copies of NIED Circulars. Only three schools definitely have NIED 42/93. One school has NIED 3/94 for certain, and another school may have it.

Many Principals said they do not receive documents. A teacher, trying to list the promotion subjects, said that "We can be wrong, because the things we get are old, and it may be a long time before we get new things." There may be many reasons that these documents are not in the schools or are not in use in schools. Perhaps the syllabi and circulars were delivered to schools, but were misplaced, filed away or taken from one school to another by teachers who transferred elsewhere.

COMPREHENSIBILITY

As a number of Principals and Regional Office officials told us and as statistics confirm, the least well-qualified teachers teach in the lower Grades. These teachers may have completed Standard 6, perhaps Standard 10, but have not attended teacher training courses (apart from the occasional week-long workshop). When they were in school, these teachers (at least in Ondangwa and Rundu) were not taught through the medium of English. As a consequence, English is a difficult language for these teachers and Principals to work in.

A number of Principals and teachers said that the Exams Circulars and other MEC documents in English are hard to understand the first time, even the second or third time. A few Principals brought out copies of Exams Circulars that they had made notations on, and these Principals tried to explain what they thought the circulars said. It was clear that they had read the circulars, but they did not understand the policies. More than one person in the Regional Office in Rundu said that often, although Principals receive official documents, they do not read them because they are incomprehensible.

Syllabi

An analysis of syllabi will not be undertaken here because so few schools in this sample have syllabi, and the old syllabi from the mid-1980's are being replaced gradually. The new syllabus for Grade 1 English does list basic competencies, which should be helpful to schools operating now without that guidance.

Curriculum Guide and Gazette of the Examination Board on Continuous Assessment

According to officials in the Examinations Directorate and other directorates of the MEC, the Curriculum Guide is not intended to be in use in the schools at this time. However, according to a number of MEC personnel, the intended means of assessment at the lower primary level is Continuous Assessment (CA). There are two documents providing guidance on CA. One was issued pre-independence, in 1985, as a Gazette of the Examination Board. The other document is the Curriculum Guide, issued in 1992 and available in the Regional Offices but apparently not yet approved as policy. Since CA is being implemented in parts of Ondangwa and Rundu, the guidance provided in the CA will be discussed here. The wording of the documents is strikingly similar. The Gazette stipulates that "In junior primary education examination shall consist of informal continuous evaluation...," meaning that it is:

> "informal because no formal examinations, whether internal or external, or formal tests of any kind as referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) of instruction C.3(1) of Gazette No. 1/84, shall be conducted at this level."

The Curriculum Guide states that assessment at the lower primary level should be informal and continuous, which means that it is:

> "informal, because it will be conducted while learners are carrying on with normal classroom activities; no formal examinations whether internal or external, are conducted at this level."

The Gazette defines "continuous" in the following terms:

> "continuous because every day in every lesson the teacher shall be observing, judging and evaluating systematically the quality of every pupil's oral and written work in every subject and every component of a subject, with a view to awarding a symbol which will be a reliable reflection of the pupil's level of achievement in that particular subject, or component of a subject, at that particular stage" (Chapter D, p. 18).

The Curriculum Guide states that assessment is to be:

> "continuous, because the teacher throughout the year systematically observes and makes judgements about the quality of every learner's participation and achievement in oral, practical and written work in each subject, in relation to the basic competencies" (p. 31).

Further guidance in the Curriculum Guide is that:

> "The grades obtained by learners through informal continuous assessment must be systematically recorded throughout the year. This will be used to inform parents, learners and teachers on progress and achievements and to guide compensatory teaching when needed."

The broad statements in these documents could set the tone for learner-centred teaching and assessment, but the documents lack specific and practical guidance on just what continuous assessment is and how it should be done.

Regional Office personnel had a number of questions about CA, as did teachers and Principals after we had explained the contents of the Curriculum Guide. These questions are not answered by the Curriculum Guide. Some of these questions are answered by the Gazette, though it is important to note that when Principals were asked what guidance they had to assessment, none of them listed the Gazette:

1. What are *normal* classroom activities?
2. Does informal assessment exclude tests?
3. Can assessment be written or is it only oral?
4. What does it mean to be systematic in assessment?
5. How often should these judgements be made?
6. How should they be recorded? (marks, symbols?)
7. Should all of these judgements be used in deciding a symbol?
8. How should these judgements be combined or averaged?
9. When a teacher has the judgement for each term (as a symbol or mark) how does the teacher determine the year-end symbol? Is it the final Term's symbol, or some average of the three?
10. How does a teacher know whether a learner has achieved or surpassed basic competencies?
11. Where can I get help with CA?

NIED 42/93
(Please refer to the three pages from that document, on the following pages).

In this document, in section 1.1, the promotion subjects are listed, though they are not exactly called "promotion subjects." It must be inferred that they are promotion subjects. Teachers are often unable to make this inference. There are two columns of options for passing, both of which require an E in the Medium of Instruction (note that the document does not say that a learner must have "at least" an E, or an E or higher symbol, to pass the Medium). Few of the Principals and teachers at the twelve schools visited knew that the promotion subjects in Grades 1 and 2 are the Medium of Instruction (reading and oral); Maths; and handwriting. The document confuses the matter by putting "Writing" instead of "handwriting" here; more than one teacher thought this subject meant writing in the Medium of Instruction (note: in NIED 3/94, the subject is called handwriting). None of the Principals and teachers at the twelve schools knew that the Medium and either Maths or handwriting must be passed for a learner to be promoted.

At least two schools in Ondangwa were trying to implement NIED 42/93. At both schools, however, the minimum marks required for promotion had been misunderstood. In the Medium of Instruction, Grades 1 and 2, both schools had 53 out of 100 as the minimum passing mark. In the Medium of Instruction in Grade 3, both schools had 62 out of 100 as the minimum passing mark. According to NIED 42/93, the minimum passing symbol is E, which is 40 to 49%, for all subjects, Grades 1 - 3. But in section 1.4, an example is given to show teachers how to determine what symbol a learner gets in the Medium of Instruction, which has two parts—oral and reading. The learner gets 25/40 in reading and 28/60 in oral, for a total of 53 out of 100. It seems that the two schools use this example, 53/100, as the minimum passing mark. The example on the following page, section 2.2, gives an example for Grade 3, with oral (17/30), reading (35/40), and writing (10/30) components, for a total of 62 out of 100. This example has been misunderstood in a similar way.

been misunderstood in a similar way.

The language and organization of NIED 42/93 is complex. A lecturer at Ongwediva College of Education, whose first language is English, had to read NIED 42/93 two or three times to begin to understand it. Then she asked me questions to clarify what she thought it said. If teachers and Principals are expected to implement policies in Exams Circulars, the language must be made clear.

At two schools, the Lead Researcher explained NIED 42/93 to teachers and Principals, and helped them practice how to do percentages and how to decide promotion based on MEC policy. Some Principals had read the document more than once, but did not understand that the first section, under "A learner passes either with the symbols under 1 or 2...," lists the promotion subjects. After perhaps an hour of discussion, the staff at the schools understood the policy better. Without this discussion, the teachers and Principal would have continued to do things as they thought the document said they should be done.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

File No. 21/1/P
Enquiries: J H Erasmus & L E Ras
Tel (061) 2934445 / 2934454

Directorate of Examination
Private Bag 12026
WINDHOEK

CIRCULAR: NIED 42/93

19 October 1993

TO: HEAD OFFICE PERSONNEL
REGIONAL OFFICES PERSONNEL
ALL SCHOOLS

1993 SCHOOL-BASED END-OF-YEAR EXAMINATIONS

1. This Circular deals with directives for the handling of school-based end-of-year examinations for Grades 1 to 9 and Grade 11.

2. Principals are requested to make a proper study of this circular. The circular as a whole must be discussed at a staff meeting. This will facilitate the tasks of the teachers and will ensure the smooth running of activities.

3. This circular contains the following annexures:

Annexure A: General guidelines and regulations.

Annexure B: A resumé of work procedures with specific dates.

Annexure C: Directives for the completion of Promotion Schedule (Form 0/2788[8]) for Grades 1 to 7 and Grade 11.

Directives for the completion of Promotion Schedule (Form 7-1/0042) for Grade 8 and Grade 9.

Annexure D: Pass requirements for 1993 - extracts from Circular NIED 19/92.

PREVIOUS CIRCULAR: NIED 41\93

HEADING: Rewriting of the Std 8 Afrikaans First Language HG & SG Paper 2 (Letterkunde) Examinations for Part-time candidates

ADDRESSEES: Regional Directors, Regional Examination Officials, Heads of Part-Time Centres, Chief Invigilators and Relevant Examiners & Moderators

S.B. Koopman.
DIRECTOR OF EXAMINATIONS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

ANNEXURE D

PASS REQUIREMENTS FOR 1993

1. GRADE 1 AND GRADE 2:

1.1 A learner passes either with the symbols under 1 or 2:

	1.	OR	2.
- The Medium of Instruction (Reading + Oral)	E		E
- Mathematics	E		F
- Writing	F		E

1.2 The values of symbols for the Junior Primary Phase are as follows:

A = 80% - 100%
B = 70% - 79%
C = 60% - 69%
D = 50% - 59%
E = 40% - 49%
F = 34% - 39%
FF = 0% - 33%

1.3 The weighting of the components for the Medium of Instruction should be:

	Max. Marks
Reading	40
Oral	60
Total	100

1.4 Example:

The following marks are allocated to a learner in Grade 1 for the Medium of Instruction:

Reading	25 out of 40
Oral	28 out of 60
Total	53 out of 100

The final symbol allocated to the learner for the Medium of Instruction is therefore a 'D' (53 out of 100).

1.5 Condonation: A learner may be condoned in Mathematics or Writing if F symbols are obtained in both subjects and at least an E symbol is obtained in the Medium of instruction (Reading + Oral)

1.6 For verification: Gazette of the Examination Board, Vol.2, No. 1/85:
Paragraphs D.9(1); D.9(2); D.9(3); D.9(4) and D.9(5) &
Circular NIED 13/92

2. GRADE 3:

A learner passes either with the symbols under 1, 2 or 3:

	1 OR	2 OR	3
- The Medium of Instruction (Oral, Reading and Written Work)	E	E	E
- The Other Language (Oral and Reading)	E	E	F
- Mathematics	E	F	E
- Writing	F	E	E

2.1 The weighting of the components for the Medium of Instruction in Grade 3 should be:

	Max. Marks
Oral	30
Reading	40
Written Work	30
Total	100

The weighting of the components for the Other Language in Grade 3 should be:

	Max. Marks
Oral	40
Reading	60
Total	100

2.2 Example:

The following marks are allocated to a learner in Grade 3 for the Medium of Instruction:

Oral	17 out of 30
Reading	35 out of 40
Written Work	10 out of 30
Total	62 out of 100

The final symbol allocated to the learner for the Medium of Instruction is therefore a 'C'(62 out of 100).

2.2 Condonation: A learner may be condoned in any one of Mathematics, Writing or the Other Language if F symbols are obtained in any two of them and at least an E symbol is obtained in the Medium of Instruction.

2.3 For verification of the pass requirements: Gazette of the Examination Board, Vol.2, No. 1/85: Paragraphs D.9(1); D.9(2); D.9(3); D.9(4) and D.9(5) & Circular NIED 13/92

NIED 3/94
(See the following pages, taken from the document).

While the research team was in the field, NIED 3/94 was issued as a replacement to NIED 42/93. Few schools have received this circular (see the table in section A), and the changes are to be implemented this year. There are significant procedural changes in this document. The promotion subjects for Grades 1 and 2 remain the same (see section 2.1 of the document), but now "at least two E-symbols and one F-symbol [must be] attained." So, a learner may fail the Medium of Instruction and still be promoted, if he gets E's or better in the other two subjects. It would be useful to have a special note in this section, underscoring the fact that this change has been made. The same emphasis needs to be placed on the changes in Grade 3, in which English is now no longer to be a promotion subject. Without particular emphasis on these changes, it is likely that Principals and teachers will not know the new policy.

An even greater change is introduced in NIED 3/94. The symbols are listed as:

A = Exceptionally Good
B = Well Above Average
C = Above Average
D = Average
E = Below Average
F = Well Below Average
G = Weak

Interestingly, the NIED 3/94 guidance to symbols is similar to the Gazette of the Examination Board issue of 1/85, which lists symbols as follows:

A = Very good (excellent)
B = Good
C = Above average
D = Average
E = Below average
F = Weak
FF = Very weak (fail)

NIED 3/94 states that "the values designated by the symbols do not necessarily relate to the percentage mark (numerical value) used in the previous dispensation." The document is unclear as to whether percentages should no longer be used at all, or whether some other scale of percentages equivalent to the new list of symbols should be used, or whether some entirely different guide should be used to decide symbols.

It is not understood by some Regional Office officials why these changes are being made. Was there a particular reason for returning to a system of symbols with descriptions like those given by the Examinations Board pre-independence? Was research done in the schools which suggested that teachers have trouble doing percentages (which we found to be the case in both Ondangwa and Rundu)? Or is there a sense among the Examination Board members that teachers are able to arrive at symbols more easily and more accurately through some means other than percentages? This study suggests that this is not the case, and that teachers, in the absence of any standard criteria, will have even greater problems with symbols than they do with numeric marks.

In the twelve schools visited, we found enormous variation in how teachers arrive at symbols. All the schools use percentages, some incorrectly. But percentages were the guide to symbols. Now, if "exceptionally good" to "average" to "weak" are the guides to symbols, the question becomes how teachers will decide what is average, and so on. Average might mean the median or the middle of the performance in a class, in which case "average" would vary from year to year with the performance of the class. In that case, there would be no standardisation whatsoever within schools or across schools, since there would be variation in performance. Alternatively, "average" might mean "acceptable" performance in relation to basic competencies, assuming basic competencies have been defined and all teachers have access to that information.

No further guidance is given in NIED 3/94 as to what "average" means. There is discussion in the Curriculum Guide of relating levels of achievement (symbols) to "the knowledge, skills and attitudes described in the syllabus." However, it is not clear that this same guidance applies in NIED 3/94. Furthermore, for the Lower Primary Grades, the only new syllabus with basic competencies listed is English Grade 1, a syllabus that 11/12 of the schools visited do not have.

The Gazette of the Examination Board 1/85 gives the following guidance:

> "In evaluation and the awarding of a suitable symbol to reflect any pupil's level of achievement reliably, the point of departure shall always be the level of achievement of the ordinary, normal, average pupil who progresses normally without achieving above or below average, a level of achievement represented by the D-symbol on the seven level scale; and symbols higher or lower than the average symbol, shall be awarded in accordance with the degree to which the pupil achieves noticeably better, or worse, than the afore-mentioned [sic] ordinary, normal, average pupil" (Chapter D, p. 18).

This guidance to the meaning of "average" is hardly more helpful than that provided in NIED 3/94.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

File Number: 21/1/P
21/2/P
21/8/P

Directorate of National
Examinations and Assessment
Private Bag 12026
WINDHOEK

Enquiries: J Erasmus
Tel. : (061) 2934445

11 July 1994

CIRCULAR NO. NIED 3/94

Note: This circular updates and replaces Annexure D of Circular NIED 42/93

TO: Government and Registered Private Schools
Head Office Personnel: Heads of Subdivisions and upwards
Regional Offices: Senior Personnel

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION IN 1994, GRADES 1 - 12

1. GENERAL REMARKS

1.1 The promotion requirements contained in this circular are applicable to all government and private schools registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, unless written permission has been obtained from the Permanent Secretary to deviate from them.

This year will be another step forward in the reform of the assessment and promotion system at primary and junior secondary levels. The first step was contained in circular NIED 19/92, which began the process of transforming assessment in basic education (primary and junior secondary levels). **The information and instructions in this circular update and replace those in Circular NIED 19/92 and 42/93.** It is based in part on feedback we have received from principals and teachers over the last couple of years.

Our reform goal remains the same: to provide the best and most complete education possible to every Namibian child. This means we must develop positive, learner-centred and simpler assessment and procedures for promotion. Ultimately these changes, like all reform measures, will depend on the good will, common sense and professionalism of teachers and principals.

1.2 Please note that as from 1994 it is compulsory to obtain at least 1/3 of the marks for a language to be promoted in Grades 4, 5 and 6.

1.3 It is also important to note that as from 1994 it is compulsory to obtain at least 1/3 of the marks in English to be promoted in Grade 7.

2. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION FROM GRADE 1 TO GRADE 2 AND FROM GRADE 2 TO GRADE 3

2.1 A learner is promoted if, in three subjects

the Medium of Instruction (reading and oral)
Mathematics
Handwriting

at least two E-symbols and one F-symbol are attained.

2.2 The values designated by the symbols are:

A = Exceptionally Good
B = Well Above Average
C = Above Average
D = Average
E = Below Average
F = Well Below Average
G = Weak

Please note that the values designated by the symbols do not necessarily relate to the percentage mark (numerical value) used in the previous dispensation. However, schools making use of computer programmes to compute results may translate letter grades into percentages.

2.3 In assessing learner performance in the language skills in the language which is the Medium of Instruction, equal value should be given to the different language skills.

Example: A learner in Grade 2 receives E in Reading and C in Oral. The overall symbol awarded is D. Where no such obvious balance exists, the teacher's best judgement will be necessary.

2.4 Condonation

Learners whose performance does not qualify them for promotion but are nonetheless close to the requirements, may be considered for condonation on the recommendation of the principal to the regional director or an official nominated by him/her. Where the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue, condonation of a language should especially be considered for those candidates whose performance is very close to the requirements.

No learner shall repeat more than once at the lower primary level (Grades 1, 2 and 3). A learner who is not promoted at this level for the second time must be transferred to the next grade and a detailed report on the area(s) where remedial teaching should be given, should be submitted by the principal to the teacher of the next grade and the parents concerned. A record of such promotion with the relevant report should be kept at the principal's office.

Please note that movement of learners from one school to another should be monitored to ensure that misuse is not made of the concession to proceed to the next grade after failing to be promoted at the lower primary level for the second time.

3. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION FROM GRADE 3 TO GRADE 4

3.1 A learner is promoted if, in three subjects

the Medium of Instruction (reading, oral, written work)
Mathematics
Handwriting

at least two E-symbols and one F-symbol are attained.

3.2 The values designated by the symbols are:

A = Exceptionally Good
B = Well Above Average
C = Above Average
D = Average
E = Below Average
F = Well Below Average
G = Weak

Please note that the values designated by the symbols do not necessarily relate to the percentage mark (numerical value) used in the previous dispensation. However, schools making use of computer programmes to compute results may translate letter grades into percentages.

3.3 In assessing learner performance in the language skills in the language which is the Medium of Instruction, equal value should be given to the different language skills.

Example: A learner in Grade 3 receives E in Reading, C in Oral and D in Written Work. The overall symbol awarded is D. Where no such obvious balance exists, the teacher's best judgement will be necessary.

3.4 Condonation

Learners whose performance does not qualify them for promotion but are nonetheless close to the requirements, may be considered for condonation on the recommendation of the principal to the regional director or an official nominated by him/her. Where the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue, condonation of a language should especially be considered for those candidates whose performance is very close to the requirements.

No learner shall repeat more than once at the lower primary level (Grades 1, 2 and 3 to be considered lower primary level in the transitional period). A learner who is not promoted at this level for the second time must be transferred to the next grade and a detailed report on the area(s) where remedial teaching should be given, should be submitted by the principal to the teacher of the next grade and the parents concerned. A record of such promotion with the relevant report should be kept at the principal's office.

Please note that movement of learners from one school to another should be monitored to ensure that misuse is not made of the concession to proceed to the next grade after failing to be promoted at the lower primary level for the second time.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION FROM GRADE 4 TO GRADE 5

4.1 Remarks:

Some schools have permission to combine History and Geography into one subject (Social Studies) for teaching purposes, thus totalling 40 marks for the combination. For promotion purposes (see 4.2 below), however, these are considered two subjects.

Another question arising from NIED 3/94 is the level of subjectivity of grading. In two schools, Principals said that grading has become less subjective since Independence, that teachers pass learners who "learn hard" and do well, not only the children they like or the children of relatives and friends. It is hard to argue, however, that all subjectivity can be eliminated in grading. Teachers are more likely to pass learners they like and to fail learners they do not like. An example of this is school number 6, where a girl named Sarah is "not weak" as a learner, but is stubborn. Sarah has spent seven years in school, and she is only in Grade 3, because she is stubborn. Changing from the guidance of percentages to a system in which teachers award symbols based on some unspecified or vague criteria, would not help learners like Sarah.

One last issue in NIED 3/94 is the section that discusses the number of times a learner may repeat in Grades 1 - 3. The document states that:

> "No learner shall repeat more than once at the *lower primay level* (Grades 1, 2 and 3). A learner who is not promoted at *this level* for the second time must be transferred to the next grade and a detailed report on the area(s) where remedial teaching should be given, should be submitted by the principal to the teacher of the next grade and the parents concerned."

Several MEC officials who were not involved in the Technical Coordinating Committee discussions surrounding this policy interpreted the policy in two ways. One interpretation was that learners may fail once only in Grades 1 to 3. In other words, if a learner fails Grade 1, he may not be failed in either Grade 2 or 3. The other interpretation of the policy was that a learner may fail only once in each of the grades. For instance, the learner may fail Grade 1, then 2 and 3, but may not be failed twice in Grade 2. According to two Ministry personnel involved in the formation of the policy, the meaning of the policy is that a learner may fail once in each grade from Grades 1 to 3. This lack of clarity in a policy with far-reaching effects, is troubling.

The following discussion considers the intended meaning of the policy. To reduce repetition is essential. However, based on the information gathered in the twelve schools, it is not at all clear that this policy is the best way to reduce repetition. It makes sense to pass the learner who should have passed, but who failed because a teacher miscalculated his percentages, or used the wrong promotion subjects. There are, however, many other reasons learners are not promoted, and these reasons need to be considered before policies are implemented. One issue is whether the policy would be implemented at schools. At one school in the study, teachers and the Principal have been told by the Inspector that learners should not be kept in a grade three or four years. Yet the practice of having learners repeat grades multiple times continues because the teachers think the policy is not a good idea. At another school, there was concern among the staff that if all the learners were to pass in a class, the teacher would have had to "push" them through, meaning that not all the learners should have passed. It is reasonable to assume that a number of schools will have similar objections to this policy.

The other issue is what the consequences of implementation might be. If learners, who have not achieved whatever basic competencies on which the next grade's teaching will be built, are promoted through the system, there could be undesirable consequences. Learners could leave school after a number of years, but not be able to read and do basic calculations. Classes could have an even wider range of abilities, without having teachers trained in how to teach such classes. Finally, the goal of having remedial teaching is a fine one, but there are few schools with the resources (including teachers with the time and skills needed) to do remedial teaching. The findings of this study suggest that while the "wastage" and costs of repetition are great, the costs of almost-automatic promotion could be even greater.

ACTUAL ASSESSMENT AND PROMOTION PRACTICES IN 12 SCHOOLS

Exposure/sources of information on continuous assessment (CA)

The two documents providing guidance on CA are the 1985 Gazette of the Examination Board. The other document is the Curriculum Guide, issued in 1992 but apparently not yet approved as policy. Since CA is being implemented in parts of Ondangwa and Rundu, the guidance provided for CA will be discussed here.

One Principal in Rundu said he got a letter from the Regional Office telling him that CA should be done, and that it means oral assessment. He could not find the letter. A number of Principals in Rundu and some in Ondangwa have attended workshops on CA. Few teachers have attended these training sessions, which last a week. These workshops were handled by Subject Advisors. In one region, when I asked a Subject Advisor for the materials used in the workshop, she showed me an exercise book with a grid for 10 assessments worth 10 marks each in Maths, and something similar in the languages. There were no other materials. I asked what the workshop participants were told about CA and she was unable to give me a definition or the purpose of CA. She did say that learners in the early grades are "too small, so they cannot be asked to remember at the end of Term 3 what they learned in Term 1."

Not all teachers and Principals have heard of CA, and several schools keep marks for tests and exams only, without doing any CA.

Materials Available on CA

No Principal or teacher had any written information on CA. One Principal said he had taken notes at the workshop, but did not know where they were.

What is CA? What is the purpose of CA?

After I asked these questions of people in schools and the Regional Office, they in turn often asked me to answer the questions. Using the Curriculum Guide alone as a reference, I was not able to answer their questions satisfactorily.

At one of the Colleges of Education, a lecturer said that CA is "a hocus pocus that no one knows what it is." The lecturer continued, saying that CA goes against the long tradition of exam-based assessment, so a strong effort to teach teachers about CA is essential.

An official in the Rundu Regional Office said that schools do not know what CA is, nor the purposes of it. A survey done by Rundu Subject Advisors in 10 schools in August got the following answers to the question of the purpose of CA: "to see how the learners progress," and "evaluation." One teacher in Rundu said that CA "is like a witness for you—you can show parents how a child did through the whole year," and defend the decision to fail a child.

One Principal in Ondangwa said that CA is "the assessment a teacher makes when he is teaching," to see what learners know. A teacher in Rundu was only able to say that CA is done in place of exams. Another teacher in Rundu said that the purpose of CA is "to see if children are doing well."

A Principal in Rundu said that the purpose of CA is to make exams week easier. For the subjects teachers have CA marks in, there are no exams. Because learners in Grades 1 to 3 have to be assessed orally, assessment takes a lot of time—more time than teachers have during exams week. And for the other subjects, there is time for exams.

A few teachers, when asked, said that CA is useful in showing them when the learners do not understand. In those cases, the teachers repeat lessons.

How many teachers do CA and how do they do it?

Many teachers either said they do CA, or did not know the term, but do some kind of assessment during the term, in addition to exams at the end of each term. Teachers who do CA usually have a format like the one shown to the Lead Researcher by the Subject Advisor, with 10 assessments worth 10 marks each, to get the percentage which they convert (using a MEC scale) to symbols. These teachers administer CA, but they were often unable to explain where the marks come from. Some teachers said they give small tests, or do oral assessment of work in class. When asked for an example of an activity, many teachers could not describe one. They also could not say how they allocated those 10 marks. For instance, how did the teacher decide that a learner got 7/10? Few teachers were able to answer these questions.

One frequent comment from teachers is that CA is oral, not written. Many teachers were told by Principals or in workshops that learners are not able to write in the first three grades, and so all assessment should be oral. Some teachers interpret this statement as meaning that no writing should be done by learners in Grades 1 to 3 except for some Maths and Handwriting. One teacher in Rundu said that many more learners pass under CA than with exams, not because they are clever or "learning hard," but because oral assessment is easier for learners than written assessment. She said that learners are able to pass Grade 3, but they "don't know how to read" or even how to write their names.

Instead, they just listen in class and repeat, and don't understand. In this teacher's opinion, CA is not a good idea.

A number of teachers said they do CA, but had no marks recorded (by the time of our interviews, done from early July to mid-August). A few teachers said they had the CA record book at home, but never brought it to show us. Several teachers said they do CA at the end of the term over a period of a few days. These teachers were unable to explain what the difference was, then, between CA and exams. One teacher explained the lack of CA marks by saying that she had not taught enough to test the learners on anything (this comment was made two months into the term).

CA and promotion

The following table shows how Principals and teachers say they determine pass/fail for learners:

Region	EXAMS ONLY	EXAMS and TESTS	EXAMS & CA	CA ONLY
ONDANGWA	4	10	6	1
RUNDU	3	3	9	5
TOTAL	7	13	15	6

One Principal said that a Senior Inspector told him that it is impossible for learners to fail Grades 1 and 2 because the school is to assess learners on what they are doing, and all learners are doing something. The teachers at his school, however, do not follow that policy.

Many teachers use a form of CA, recording learners' marks on oral and written work throughout the term, but do not use these marks in finding a symbol for promotion purposes. Two teachers said that they use CA marks only if a learner is absent for an exam.

Some teachers use CA throughout the year, and add those marks to the exam results. They were unable to explain the relative weights of the CA and exams. For example, do the symbols from the first two terms count for two-thirds of the final symbol, and the exam one-third?

General comments on CA and its implementation

One Regional Office official said that he cannot expect teachers to change their ways of assessing without usable documents telling them what they should be doing. He concluded, "People sit at Head Office preaching learner-centred education without giving guidance."

Promotion Practices in the Schools
NIED 42/93 (the circular in effect while the research team was in the schools)
and NIED 3/94 (the new policy on promotion)

There is wide variation in the promotion practices in the twelve schools visited. The first area of concern is the promotion subjects and what they mean. In Grades 1 and 2, prior to the issue of NIED 3/94, the promotion subjects were : Medium of Instruction (oral and reading); Maths; and handwriting. Few teachers use this set of promotion subjects in the twelve schools visited. The other subjects teachers and Principals use as promotion subjects include: English (which was the most frequently listed incorrect promotion subject); Bible; environment; and Medium of Instruction (writing). Some teachers did not list handwriting as a promotion subject, and others did not know that Maths is a promotion subject.

Often teachers did not know what their source of information on promotion subjects was. Other times, they said the Principal had told them what to use, or a letter or circular from the MEC was the source. A common source of information mentioned was the Exams Schedule, which teachers fill in to keep as a school record of pass/fail. A copy is also supposed to go to the Regional Office, which issues these Schedules to the schools. Different Exams Schedules are used in different schools in each region, and a number of these forms incorrectly list the promotion and non-promotion subjects. The most frequent mistake in these Schedules is to list English as a promotion subject.

The problems are similar in Grade 3, with the difference that, prior to the issue of NIED 3/94, English was a promotion subject. Errors made are mainly neglecting handwriting as a promotion subject and including English writing as a promotion subject, when only English oral and reading are to be used.

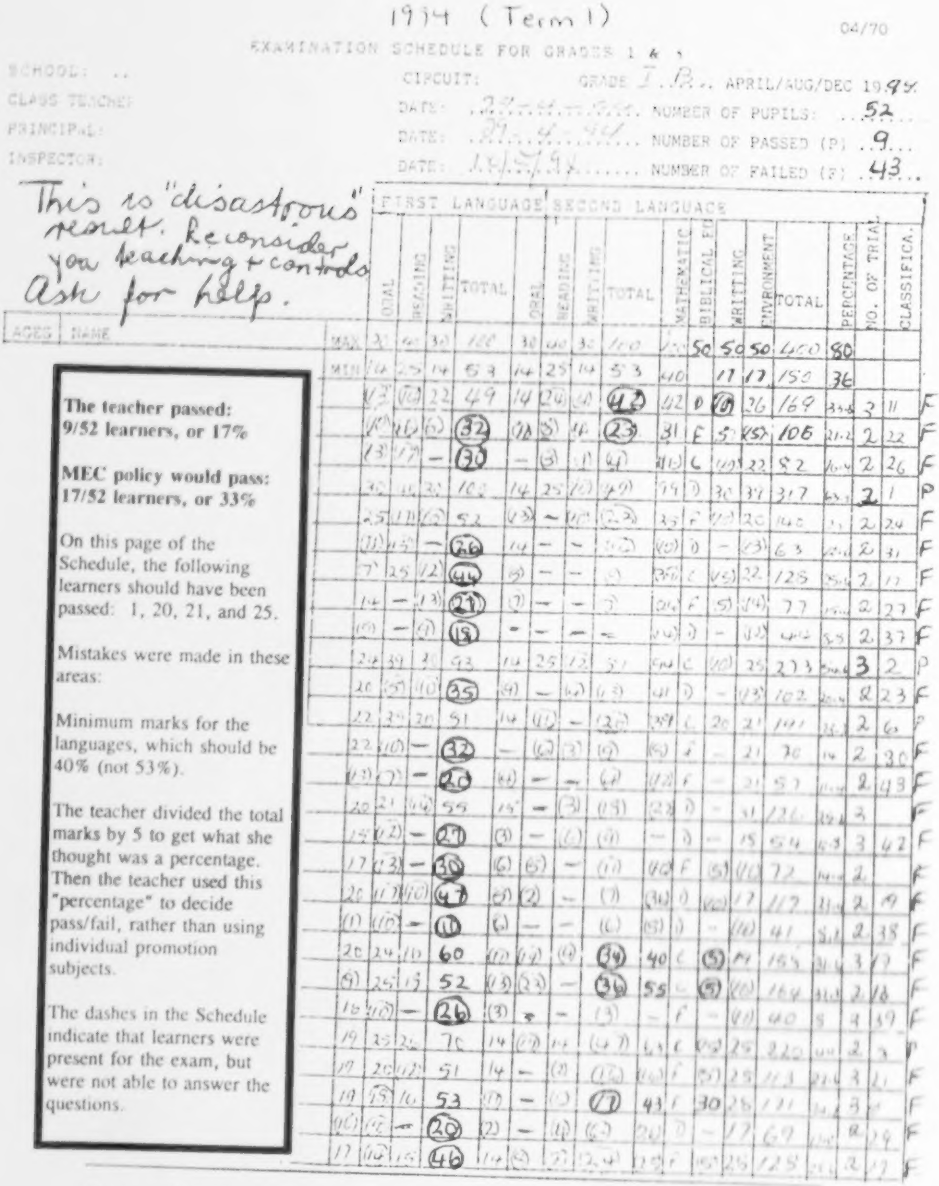
The next point of confusion is regarding which subjects must be passed for a learner to be promoted. Some teachers said that all the promotion subjects, whatever teachers thought they were, had to be passed. Others said that one promotion subject could be failed. A few teachers said that two promotion subjects and one non-promotion subject had to be passed for a learner to go on. A large group of teachers and principals thought that it is not the individual subjects that decide promotion, but the overall percentage of the total of the subjects listed in the Exams Schedule. In other words, all the subjects' marks were added together to find a total, which had to be at a certain level to allow promotion. It seems quite likely that this point of confusion comes from the way promotion is decided in Upper Primary, which requires that a certain average be reached.

Ideas about what percentage or symbol is passing also differed. In NIED 42/93, 40% or E is the lowest percentage/symbol with which a learner may pass. Some teachers thought that 34% is passing, or that F is not failing. This is based on a scale issued by a previous dispensation or the MEC at some point in time, that describes F as "weak," and only FF as "very weak (fail)". Many teachers, in deciding the minimum passing mark in a given subject, made mistakes in the percentages. For instance, in one school, with a 25 mark Handwriting assessment, teachers had 6 as the minimum pass mark. 6/25 is only

24%, when the minimum required mark should be 10. This kind of error in calculating the minimum mark needed for promotion occurred at several schools.

Teachers at many schools have trouble doing percentages. At school number 6, the Principal told teachers in Grades 1 and 2 that to get an average for each learner, they should add up all the marks and divide by the number of subjects, 5. If all the maximum possible marks in each subject had been 100, this way of finding the average would be correct. However, Maths was worth only 75 marks, and handwriting was worth 25, and so on. As a consequence many learners who should have passed, were failed.

On the following pages are five Exam Schedules from the schools visited. These Schedules illustrate a number of problems teachers have in determining promotion.



1994 (Term 1)

04/70

EXAMINATION SCHEDULE FOR GRADES 1 & 2

SCHOOL: ..

CLASS TEACHER

PRINCIPAL:

INSPECTOR:

CIRCUIT:

GRADE I.B.. APRIL/AUG/DEC 19.94

DATE: .29-4-94. NUMBER OF PUPILS: ..52..

DATE: ..29-4-94.... NUMBER OF PASSED (P) ..9...

DATE: .18/5/94....... NUMBER OF FAILED (F) ..43..

This is "disastrous" result. Reconsider you teaching + controls Ask for help.

AGES	NAME		FIRST LANGUAGE				SECOND LANGUAGE												
			ORAL	READING	WRITTING	TOTAL	ORAL	READING	WRITTING	TOTAL	MATHEMATIC	BIBLICAL ED	WRITTING	ENVIRONMENT	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF TRIA	CLASSIFICA.	
		MAX	30	40	30	100	30	40	30	100	[illegible]	50	50	50	400	80			
		MIN	14	25	14	53	14	25	14	53	40		17	17	150	36			
			(13)	(10)	22	49	14	(24)	(4)	㊷	42	0	⑩	26	169	33.8	3	11	F
			(10)	(16)	(6)	㉜	(12)	(5)	(6)	㉓	31	F	5	(25)	106	21.2	2	22	F
			(13)	(17)	—	㉚	—	(3)	(1)	(4)	(11)	6	(10)	22	82	16.4	2	26	F
			30	40	30	100	14	25	(10)	(49)	79	0	30	39	317	63.4	2	1	P
			25	(11)	(15)	52	(13)	—	(10)	(23)	35	F	(10)	20	140	[illegible]	2	24	F
			(11)	15	—	㉖	14	—	—	(12)	(10)	0	—	(13)	63	12.6	2	31	F
			7	25	(12)	㊹	(8)	—	—	(8)	(35)	6	(15)	22	128	25.6	2	17	F
			14	—	(13)	㉗	(7)	—	—	(7)	(26)	F	(5)	(14)	77	15.4	2	27	F
			(5)	—	(9)	⑱	-	—	—	—	(14)	0	—	(12)	44	8.8	2	37	F
			24	39	30	93	14	25	12	51	54	6	(10)	25	233	46.6	3	2	P
			20	(5)	(10)	㉟	(9)	—	(4)	(13)	41	0	—	(13)	102	20.4	2	23	F
			22	39	30	91	14	(12)	—	(26)	39	6	20	21	197	39.4	2	6	P
			22	(10)	—	㉜	—	(6)	(3)	(9)	(5)	F	—	21	70	14	2	30	F
			(13)	(7)	—	⑳	(4)	—	—	(4)	(12)	F	—	21	57	11.4	2	43	F
			20	21	(14)	55	15	—	(3)	(18)	(22)	0	—	31	126	25.2	3		F
			15	(12)	—	㉗	(3)	—	(1)	(4)	—	0	—	15	54	10.8	3	42	F
			17	(13)	—	㉚	(6)	(5)	—	(11)	(10)	F	(5)	(10)	72	14.4	2		F
			20	(17)	(10)	㊼	(5)	(2)	—	(7)	(34)	0	(10)	17	117	23.4	2	19	F
			(1)	(10)	—	⑪	(6)	—	—	(6)	(13)	0	—	(11)	41	8.2	2	38	F
			20	24	16	60	(11)	(19)	(4)	㉞	40	6	⑤	14	155	31.0	3	17	F
			(9)	25	15	52	(13)	(23)	—	㊱	55	[illegible]	⑤	(10)	164	32.8	2	18	F
			16	(10)	—	㉖	(3)	-	—	(3)	—	F	—	(11)	40	8	4	39	F
			19	25	26	70	14	(19)	14	(47)	63	6	(10)	25	220	44	2	3	P
			19	20	(12)	51	14	—	(2)	(16)	(10)	F	(5)	25	113	22.6	3	21	F
			19	(15)	16	53	(1)	—	(1)	⑰	43	F	30	28	171	34.2	3	[illegible]	F
			(10)	(10)	—	⑳	(2)	—	(4)	(6)	(20)	0	—	17	69	13.8	2	29	F
			17	(14)	15	㊻	14	(5)	(7)	(26)	(25)	F	(5)	25	128	[illegible]	2	17	F

The teacher passed:
9/52 learners, or 17%

MEC policy would pass:
17/52 learners, or 33%

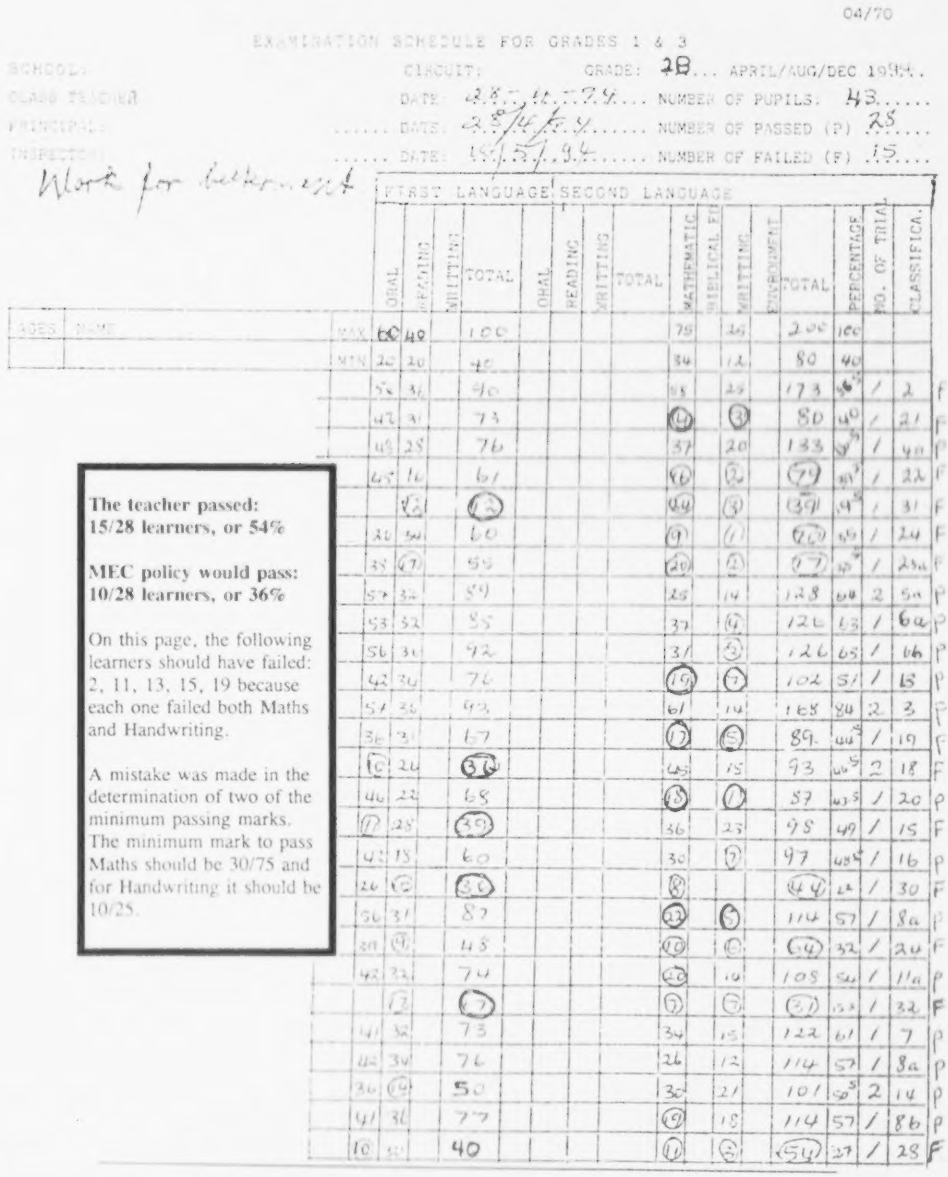
On this page of the Schedule, the following learners should have been passed: 1, 20, 21, and 25.

Mistakes were made in these areas:

Minimum marks for the languages, which should be 40% (not 53%).

The teacher divided the total marks by 5 to get what she thought was a percentage. Then the teacher used this "percentage" to decide pass/fail, rather than using individual promotion subjects.

The dashes in the Schedule indicate that learners were present for the exam, but were not able to answer the questions.



04/70

EXAMINATION SCHEDULE FOR GRADES 1 & 3

SCHOOL: CIRCUIT: GRADE: 2B... APRIL/AUG/DEC 1994.

CLASS TEACHER DATE: 28-4-94... NUMBER OF PUPILS: 43.....

PRINCIPAL: ...... DATE: 28/4/94...... NUMBER OF PASSED (P) 25.....

INSPECTOR: ...... DATE: 15/5/94...... NUMBER OF FAILED (F) .15....

Work for betterment

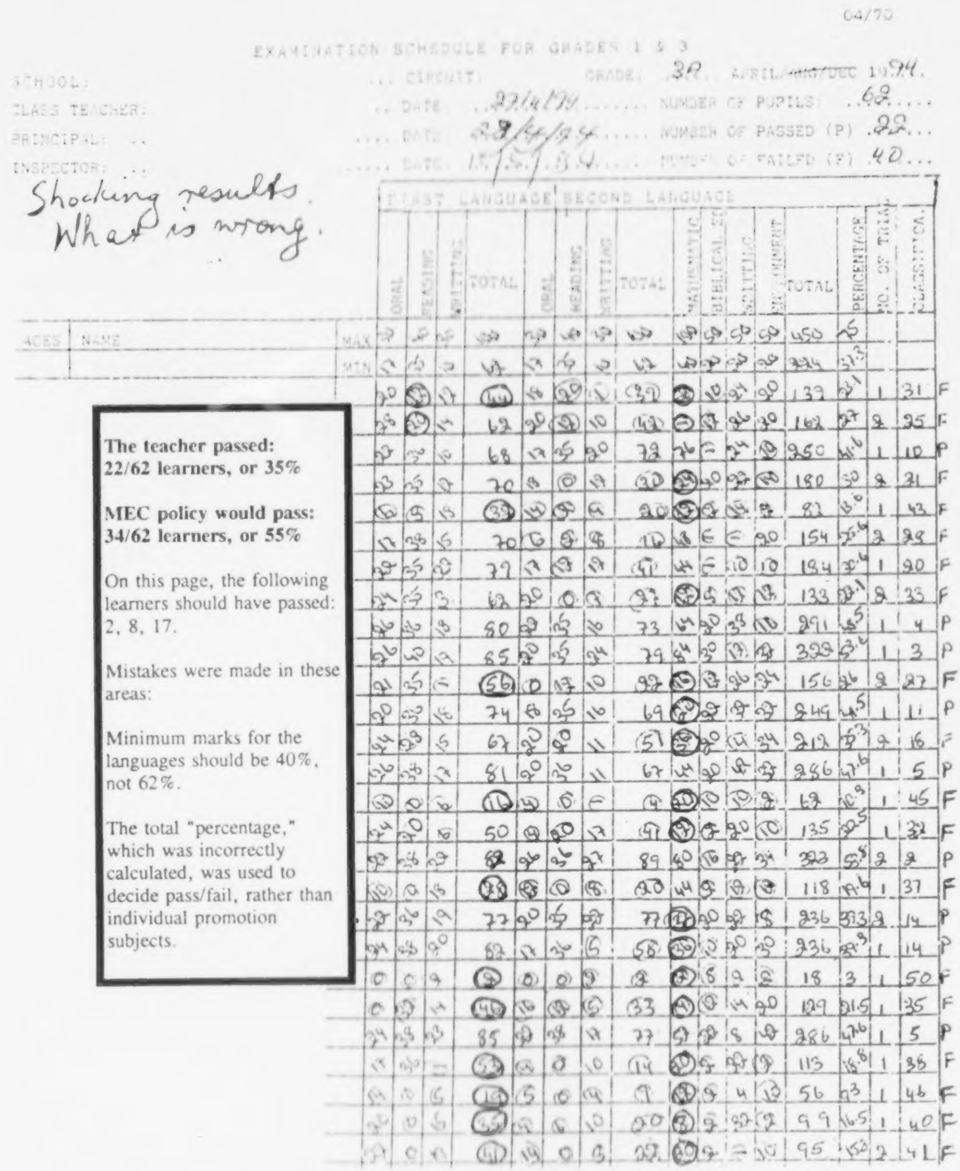
AGES	NAME		FIRST LANGUAGE				SECOND LANGUAGE												
			ORAL	READING	WRITTING	TOTAL	ORAL	READING	WRITTING	TOTAL	MATHEMATIC	BIBLICAL ED	WRITTING	ENVIRONMENT	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF TRIAL	CLASSIFICA.	
		MAX	60	40		100					75		25		200	100			
		MIN	20	20		40					34		12		80	40			
			56	36		90					68		25		173	86^5	/	2	F
			42	31		73					4		3		80	40	/	21	F
			48	28		76					37		20		133	66^5	/	40	P
			45	16		61					16		2		79	39^5	/	22	F
				12		12					24		3		39	19^5	/	31	F
			26	34		60					9		1		70	35	/	24	F
			38	17		55					20		2		77	38^5	/	23a	F
			57	32		89					25		14		128	64	2	5a	P
			53	32		85					37		4		126	63	/	6a	P
			56	36		92					31		3		126	65	/	6b	P
			42	34		76					19		7		102	51	/	13	P
			57	36		93					61		14		168	84	2	3	P
			36	31		67					17		5		89	44^5	/	19	F
			10	26		36					45		15		93	46^5	2	18	F
			46	22		68					13		1		57	43.5	/	20	P
			11	28		39					36		23		98	49	/	15	F
			42	18		60					30		7		97	48^5	/	16	P
			26	10		36					8				44	22	/	30	F
			56	31		87					22		5		114	57	/	8a	P
			20	9		48					10		6		64	32	/	24	F
			42	32		74					20		14		108	54	/	11a	P
				12		17					7		7		31	15^5	/	32	F
			41	32		73					34		15		122	61	/	7	P
			42	34		76					26		12		114	57	/	8a	P
			36	14		50					30		21		101	50^5	2	14	P
			41	36		77					19		18		114	57	/	8b	P
			10	30		40					11		3		54	27	/	28	F

The teacher passed: 15/28 learners, or 54%

MEC policy would pass: 10/28 learners, or 36%

On this page, the following learners should have failed: 2, 11, 13, 15, 19 because each one failed both Maths and Handwriting.

A mistake was made in the determination of two of the minimum passing marks. The minimum mark to pass Maths should be 30/75 and for Handwriting it should be 10/25.



04/70

EXAMINATION SCHEDULE FOR GRADES 1 & 3

SCHOOL: ... CIRCUIT: GRADE: 3? APRIL/~~JUN~~/DEC 19.94.
CLASS TEACHER: .. DATE: ..27/4/94...... NUMBER OF PUPILS: ..62....
PRINCIPAL: .. .... DATE: 28/4/94..... NUMBER OF PASSED (P) .22...
INSPECTOR: .. .. DATE: 15/5/94.... NUMBER OF FAILED (F) .40...

Shocking results.
What is wrong.

FIRST LANGUAGE | SECOND LANGUAGE

ORAL | READING | WRITING | TOTAL | ORAL | READING | WRITING | TOTAL | MATHEMATIC | BIBLICAL ST | WRITING | ENVIRONMENT | TOTAL | PERCENTAGE | NO. OF TRIAL | CLASSIFICA.

AGES | NAME | MAX | MIN

The teacher passed:
22/62 learners, or 35%

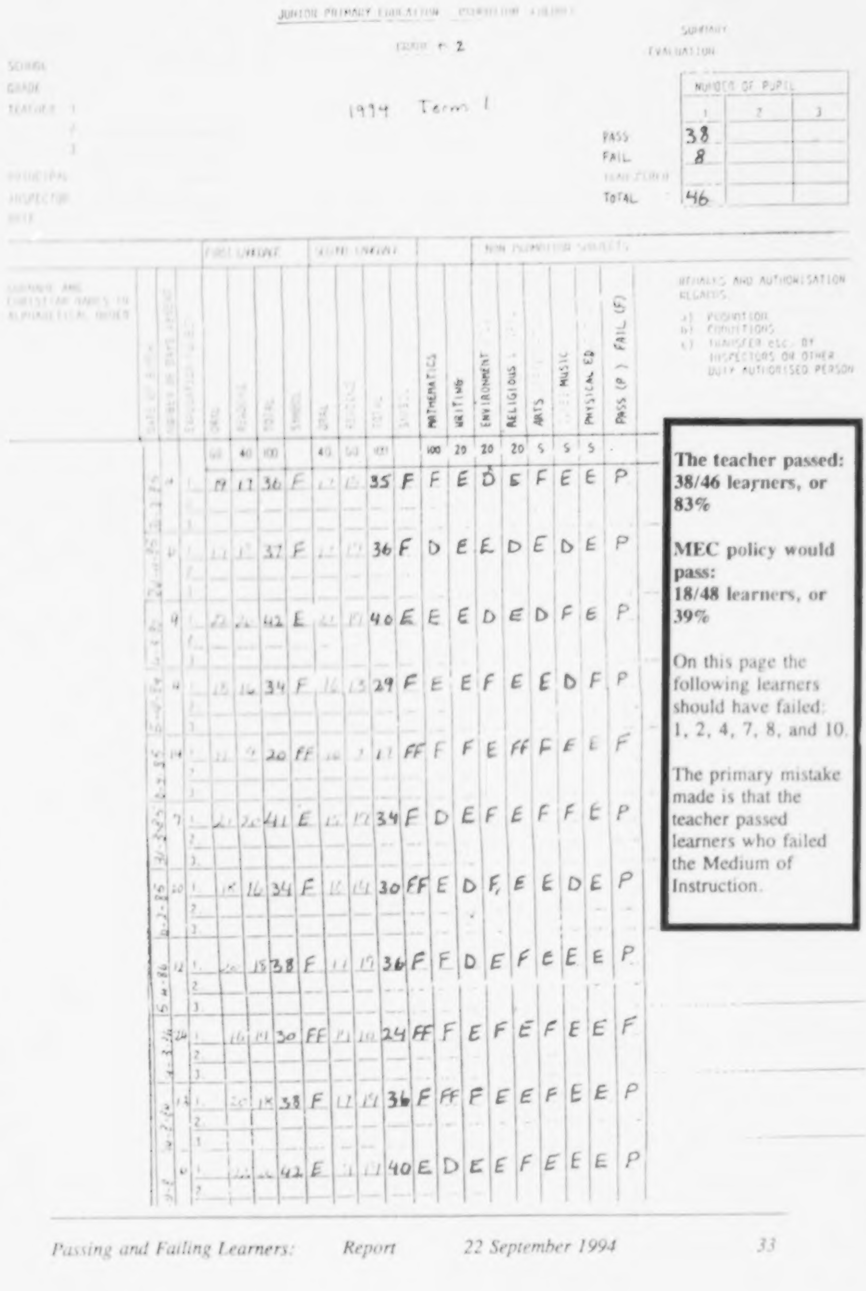
MEC policy would pass:
34/62 learners, or 55%

On this page, the following learners should have passed: 2, 8, 17.

Mistakes were made in these areas:

Minimum marks for the languages should be 40%, not 62%.

The total "percentage," which was incorrectly calculated, was used to decide pass/fail, rather than individual promotion subjects.



JUNIOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

GRADE 2

1994 Term 1

SUMMARY

EVALUATION

SCHOOL

GRADE

TEACHER 1

2

3

PRINCIPAL

INSPECTOR

DATE

	NUMBER OF PUPIL 1	2	3
PASS	38		
FAIL	8		
TRANSFERRED			
TOTAL	46		

REMARKS AND AUTHORISATION REGARDS

a) PROMOTION
b) CONDITIONS
c) TRANSFER etc. BY INSPECTORS OR OTHER DULY AUTHORISED PERSON

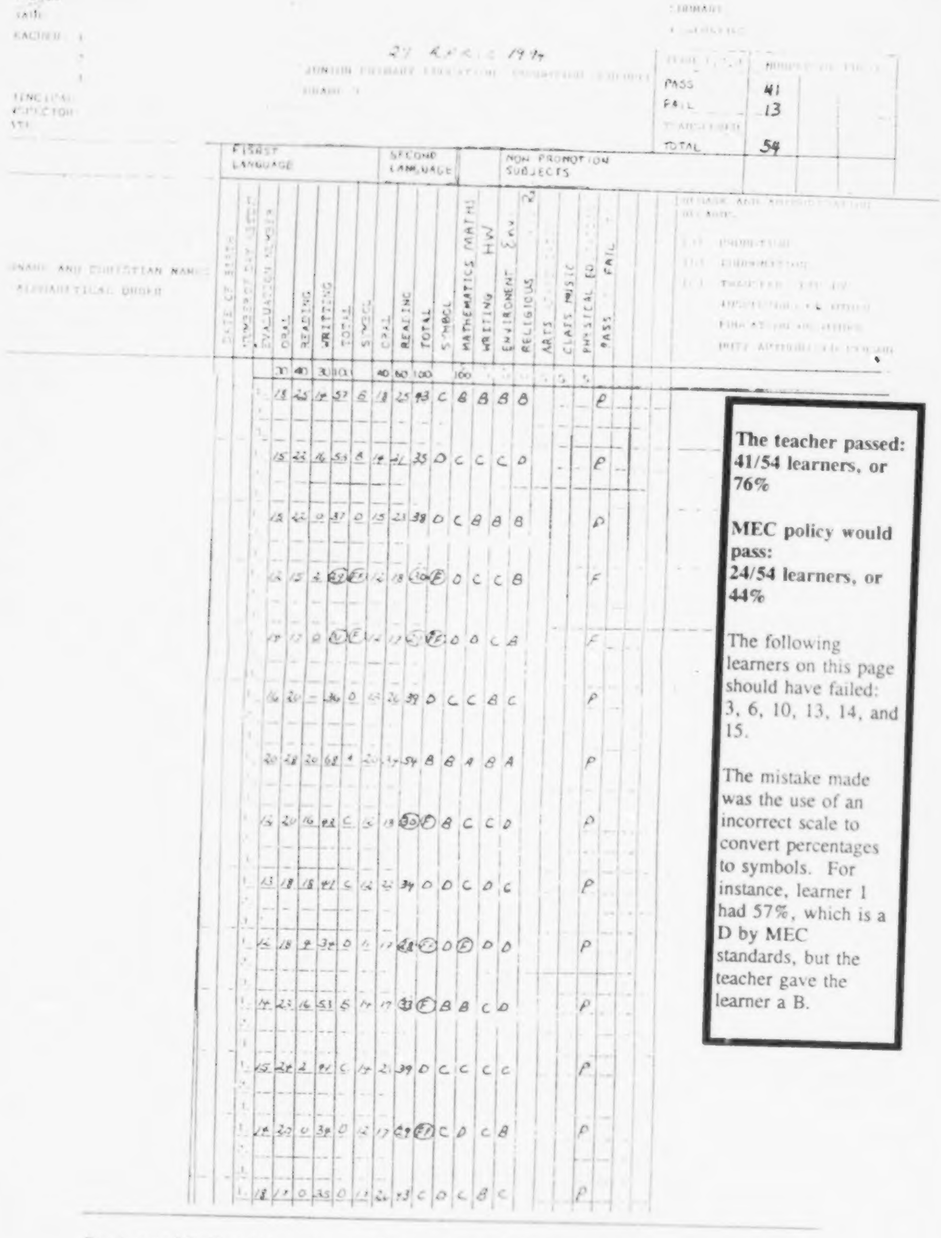
		FIRST LANGUAGE				SECOND LANGUAGE						NON PROMOTION SUBJECTS					
DATE OF BIRTH	NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT	ORAL	READING	TOTAL	SYMBOL	ORAL	READING	TOTAL	SYMBOL	MATHEMATICS	WRITING	ENVIRONMENT	RELIGIOUS	ARTS	MUSIC	PHYSICAL ED	PASS (P) FAIL (F)
		60	40	100		40	60	100		100	20	20	20	5	5	5	
[illegible]	4	19	17	36	F	[illegible]	[illegible]	35	F	F	E	D	E	F	E	E	P
[illegible]	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	37	F	[illegible]	[illegible]	36	F	D	E	E	D	E	D	E	P
[illegible]	9	22	[illegible]	42	E	[illegible]	19	40	E	E	E	D	E	D	F	E	P
[illegible]	4	15	16	34	F	16	13	29	F	E	E	F	E	E	D	F	P
[illegible]	14	[illegible]	9	20	FF	[illegible]	[illegible]	17	FF	F	F	E	FF	F	E	E	F
[illegible]	7	21	20	41	E	15	17	34	F	D	E	F	E	F	F	E	P
[illegible]	10	18	16	34	F	[illegible]	14	30	FF	E	D	F	E	E	D	E	P
5-4-86	12	20	18	38	F	17	19	36	F	F	D	E	F	E	E	E	P
[illegible]	24	16	14	30	FF	[illegible]	[illegible]	24	FF	F	E	F	E	F	E	E	F
[illegible]	13	20	18	38	F	17	19	36	F	FF	F	E	E	F	E	E	P
[illegible]	6	[illegible]	[illegible]	42	E	[illegible]	19	40	E	D	E	E	F	E	E	E	P

The teacher passed: 38/46 learners, or 83%

MEC policy would pass: 18/48 learners, or 39%

On this page the following learners should have failed: 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, and 10.

The primary mistake made is that the teacher passed learners who failed the Medium of Instruction.



SCHOOL
DATE
TEACHER 1
2
3
PRINCIPAL
INSPECTOR
SIG

27 APRIL 1994

JUNIOR PRIMARY EDUCATION: PROMOTION SCHEDULE

SUMMARY

PASS	41
FAIL	13
TRANSFERRED	
TOTAL	54

SURNAME AND CHRISTIAN NAMES (ALPHABETICAL ORDER)	DATE OF BIRTH	NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT	EVALUATION NUMBER	FIRST LANGUAGE ORAL	READING	WRITING	TOTAL	SYMBOL	SECOND LANGUAGE ORAL	READING	TOTAL	SYMBOL	MATHEMATICS MATHS	WRITING HW	ENVIRONMENT Env.	RELIGIOUS	ARTS	CLASS MUSIC	PHYSICAL ED.	PASS	FAIL
				30	40	30	100		40	60	100		100								
			1.	18	25	14	57	B	18	25	43	C	B	B	B	B				P	
				15	23	16	54	B	14	21	35	D	C	C	C	D				P	
				12	22	0	37	D	15	23	38	D	C	B	B	B				P	
				12	15	2	29	FF	12	18	30	F	D	C	C	B					F
				17	17	0	[illegible]	F	12	17	[illegible]	FF	D	D	C	A					F
				16	20	–	36	D	13	26	39	D	C	C	B	C				P	
				20	28	20	68	A	20	34	54	B	B	A	B	A				P	
				13	20	16	43	C	12	18	30	F	B	C	C	D				P	
				13	18	15	41	C	12	22	34	D	D	C	D	C				P	
				12	18	9	34	D	11	17	28	F	D	F	D	D				P	
				14	23	16	53	B	14	17	33	F	B	B	C	D				P	
				15	24	2	41	C	14	21	39	D	C	C	C	C				P	
				14	20	0	34	D	12	17	29	F	C	D	C	B				P	
				18	17	0	35	D	17	26	43	C	D	C	B	C				P	

REMARK AND ABBREVIATION

The teacher passed: 41/54 learners, or 76%

MEC policy would pass: 24/54 learners, or 44%

The following learners on this page should have failed: 3, 6, 10, 13, 14, and 15.

The mistake made was the use of an incorrect scale to convert percentages to symbols. For instance, learner 1 had 57%, which is a D by MEC standards, but the teacher gave the learner a B.

In one school, we asked the Principal and teachers questions about how they would determine the final symbol for a learner, having a symbol for each term. The Principal filled in the last column of this table:

THE PRINCIPAL:

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	FINAL SYMBOL
Johannes	D	E	F	E
Maria	C	D	B	D
Natalie	F	F	E	F

The Principal could not explain how he got the final symbols, especially the one for Maria. The symbol given Johannes seems a reasonable average of the three terms' symbols.

In a separate exercise, teachers of Grades 1, 2 and 3 from the same school were given the same names and symbols for learners for Terms 1 - 3, and were asked to get an overall symbol and to say whether the learner would pass or fail. The exercise was explained at least twice to each teacher.

THE GRADE 1 TEACHER:

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	D	P
Magdelena	C	C	D	E	F
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	F

The Grade 1 teacher was unable to explain how she got the overall symbol. For Ignatius, she said because he got a D in Term 1, he must have a D in the last Term. She then said that F is passing, and only FF is failing, but could not explain why she had said that Magdelena and Petrus should fail.

THE GRADE 2 TEACHER

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	F	F
Magdelena	C	C	D	C	P
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	P

The Grade 2 teacher said that each learner got the overall symbol he or she did because that was the symbol from the middle term. He could not explain further. Perhaps he thought the middle term must be the average because it is in the middle?

THE GRADE 3 TEACHER:

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	F	P
Magdelena	C	C	D	D	P
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	P

The Grade 3 teacher did not explain why he chose the overall symbols he did. He said that Ignatius would pass because F is a passing symbol on the report cards the school uses. He showed us a report card that confirmed this.

These teachers have very different ideas about how to find overall symbols and decide pass/fail, as the summary table shows:

	OVERALL SYMBOL			PASS OR FAIL		
LEARNER	TEACHER 1	TEACHER 2	TEACHER 3	TEACHER 1	TEACHER 2	TEACHER 3
Ignatius	D	F	F	P	F	P
Magdel.	E	C	D	F	P	P
Petrus	E	E	E	F	P	P

Only with one learner, Petrus, did the teachers come up with the same symbol, and in that case, one teacher made a different pass/fail decision than her colleagues did.

This lengthy example is discussed here not to criticise teachers. These teachers have had no guidance in deciding a final symbol without it on percentages. Rather, the purpose in discussing this example is to suggest that teachers who are told by their Principals to implement NIED 3/94, are likely to have the same kinds of problems as these teachers did, and will come up with overall symbols that are not averages of the symbols over the three terms.

In summary, there are great problems in the implementation of promotion policies. The recommendations section will discuss some suggestions for addressing these problems.

4. FACTORS IN PASS/FAIL: WHY ARE LEARNERS FAILED?

BELIEFS ABOUT PASS/FAIL

Beliefs about such things as whether it is possible for all learners to pass and about what it would mean if all the learners passed, may have an influence on the pass rate. On the other hand, teachers' and Principals' and parents ideas about whether all the children in a class can pass, may be formed by experience. If it happens regularly that all or nearly all the learners in a class pass, teachers and Principals may believe that it is perfectly normal for that to happen. But if every year, fewer than half the learners pass in each class, people are unlikely to believe that anything else is possible. At more than one school, teachers discussed the attitudes of the Principal and other teachers, and the suspicion that would arise if a whole class were to pass.

Some Principals think it would be impossible for all the learners to pass—based on the belief that because all learners have different abilities and levels of understanding, not all can pass. This position, which is held by most of the Principals and teachers interviewed, is based on a view of assessment as a comparison between learners' capacities, not on assessment as measuring the achievement of basic competencies.

PARENT CHARACTERISTICS

At nearly every school there was a gap between parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the school. Teachers and Principals often said that parents were not interested in school because they did not come to parents meetings, or refused to be on the School Committee unless they were paid, or did not "chase" the children to school, and kept them out of school to work the land or tend cattle or do other domestic work. At one school in Rundu, the Principal said that parents do not care about education, do not come to parents meetings, and do not force their children to come to school. Yet the next day, we met with parents who had come from Angola to talk with us. These parents have their son stay with relatives, and although they are not able to visit the school often, and are illiterate, they were very well informed about how their son was doing in school.

Of course there is a range of parental involvement in every school, and we spoke with some parents who had never visited the school and did not want to do so. Far more common, though, was the parent who wanted to be welcomed at the school, to talk with teachers or observe classes, but who had not been made to feel comfortable in visiting the school, unless called in to discuss a discipline problem. There were also many parents who thought it was not permitted for non-learners to sit and watch classes. These parents had the impression that school is not the business of parents. Some parents said they had visited classes to see how the teachers were teaching and how their children were doing. Based on what teachers, parents and learners said about learner performance, the children of parents who take the initiative to visit the school are likelier to pass than fail.

Schools with a high level of parental participation do not necessarily have higher pass rates than other schools. At one school in Rundu, the Principal said that the parents know the importance of education, send their children to school, and go to literacy classes. Yet the pass rate in Grade 1 in particular is very low. This low pass rate is partially accounted for by the fact that most of the learners are from Angola, and Nyemba-speaking, so they have a hard time with the Medium of Instruction the first year or two. At two other schools, parents came to school often, but had conflicts with the Principal or teachers in each school. The parents were concerned about the happenings at the school, as teachers were drunk or the Principal was unwilling to listen to their ideas.

A number of parents said they or someone at home helps the children with homework. Several learners said that before they had failed a grade, their parents did not help them with school work at home, but after they failed, their parents began teaching them how to do Maths and to read. Some parents now even come to school to check on their children's work. These learners, in their own opinions and in the estimation of their teachers, often are expected to pass. Teachers agreed that learners who receive help at home do better in school.

It is not always true, however, that learners who are helped at home are more likely to pass than other learners. At schools that had very low pass rates, and at schools where teachers had great difficulty doing percentages, there is not a close relationship between studying and being helped at home, and passing.

Not surprisingly, parents who never attended school or who have a low level of education are less likely to help their children with school work. Yet there were several parents who had never attended school, who were illiterate, but who took great interest in the education of their children. They arranged to have their children helped by neighbors and had friends read their children's reports for them. Their children tended to pass in school.

Exactly how representative the parents we spoke with are of parents in general, is uncertain. Because we chose parents of children expected by their teachers to pass, and those expected to fail, however, it is likely that we interviewed parents with a broad range of attitudes and levels of involvement in the schools.

LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

As stated earlier, this study of failure in Grades 1 to 3 did not include a standardised measure of achievement, which would be needed to discuss the relationship between achievement and pass/fail with any confidence. Several parents, trying to explain why they think their children failed, said that they "just don't get things quick." In many cases, it is clear that learners who have low aptitude fail, but it does not seem to be correspondingly true that learners of high ability pass.

Learner 'readiness' of mainly two kinds, was identified by Principals and teachers as a factor in pass/fail. By readiness, most teachers of Grade 1 meant simply that learners are 6 years old. Teachers in other grades considered readiness to mean the mastery of certain skills, such as reading.

The study did not involve a systematic investigation of the relationship between age and pass/fail but focussed on many perceptions of the relationship. At one school, teachers considered the older learners to be better learners than younger ones. But in this case, the school had a system of using the Grade 1A class as a kind of preschool, where the younger learners went, and failed; and Grade 1B, where older learners went, and passed in higher numbers. Some teachers said that underage learners (those under age 6) are more likely to fail than learners of school age. Other teachers sent their own children to school at age 4, because they believe in starting school early.

With overage learners, the reasons they are overage seem to be important. Some learners in Rundu lived inland and were too far from schools to attend. Other learners are Angolan and, because of the language of instruction, are starting school in Namibia at a lower level than they completed in Angola. Other learners were kept out of school to take care of cattle, such as one 19 year old learner who is in Grade 3 in Rundu. Still other learners started school later than age 6 because their parents, for whatever reasons, considered age 10 or so the right age to start school.

Because many underage learners are not registered and attend school only occasionally (with an older brother or sister), often they neither pass nor fail the first year of school—they simply come back to Grade 1 the next year. The presence of underage learners, however, may have a negative effect on the pass rate in a grade. In one extraordinary school, there are 106 learners in a Grade 1 class. The teacher said that 10 to 20 young children come with their brothers and sisters daily. These children sit on the floor, playing or sleeping, and when they get tired or sick, their elder siblings must take them home. There is no certainty that the underage learners' presence affects the pass rate, which is low for Grade 1, but it seems likely that that is the case.

Many teachers think that learners who attend kindergarten perform far better than other children. So few of the learners in these schools attended kindergarten, that it is not possible to compare them with learners who started school with Grade 1.

A few teachers of Grade 1 identified readiness with the mastery of skills. One teacher said she expects learners to know how to write their names and count to 10, before they come to school. She said that those learners who are 'behind' at the beginning of Grade 1 often fail.

Some teachers complained of learners coming to Grade 2 or 3 without being ready to do the work. Generally, the teachers said that these learners could not read or write or do Maths, and so were likely to fail that year.

Other learner characteristics that teachers say contribute to failure include quietness in class, naughtiness, laziness, and stubbornness. Given the short time we were in schools, we were not able to gather much data on how teachers' perceptions of these qualities affect learners passing and failing.

ATTENDANCE: LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

Learner attendance was listed as a factor in pass/fail by most teachers and Principals, as well as by learners. In extreme cases, in which a learner misses three-quarters of the days in a term, the learner fails. But in one school, where several learners missed over half the exams, and missed many days of school, the learners did not fail. In an analysis of learner attendance and pass/fail for Term 1 of this year, there was a highly variable and unclear relationship between attendance and passing, and between absence and failure. The effects of attendance on pass/fail may be irrelevant in schools where classes are so large that the teachers do not know the learners' names, in schools where teachers are absent or drunk often, and in schools with other factors that strongly influence pass/fail rates.

Attendance is related to other factors, and is hard to isolate and interpret by itself. For instance, learners may miss much school seasonally because they are sent to tend cattle. The fact that learners are sent to do this work could be an indication of parents' disregard for the importance of school, or a lack of awareness that regular attendance at school is needed. It could also be an indicator of parents' socio-economic status, with wealthier parents hiring workers to watch the cattle, and poorer parents sending their children to work.

Another reason learners miss school is, as many learners and teachers put it, "for no reason." To miss school for no reason means, to teachers and learners, that learners were not sick, nor sent to work by their parents. Actually, learners do have reasons for missing school. Missing school often, whether "for no reason" or to go fishing, or play, is an indicator that learners do not value what they do in school. There may be other problems at home or in school that make learners want to be somewhere other than school. The highest incidence of absenteeism is at schools where there is a very low pass rate, or an erratic pass rate, though the causality is not clear.

Most schools keep records of teacher attendance, and in general teachers do not miss school, though they may come late. There were a few exceptions to this situation. Three schools clearly have problems with teacher or Principal attendance, and those schools have either low pass rates in all the grades, or erratic change from grade to grade or year to year. However, because so many factors contribute to failure at those schools, it is hard to know how influential teacher absences are.

At two schools in particular, dropout in the early grades is very common. Teachers and Principals, asked why learners dropout, only said "they just stay home and don't come back." In some cases learners return to repeat the grade the next year.

QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Before discussing teaching methodology, it is important to emphasise that these comments should not be taken as criticism of teachers, but as descriptions of how things happen in these twelve schools. Many teachers have had little or no training, and are simply doing the best they can.

Teaching methods have a great deal to do with "learners not learning," which is one of the reasons teachers gave for failure. A number of parents, Principals, and teachers mentioned teaching methods as a factor in pass/fail. Choral repetition is the primary method of teaching in the languages, and even in Maths in some cases. The group repeats the poem, or the passage from a book, or the sum, and that is often the whole lesson. In the majority of the cases, it was clear that the learners were not reading, but were just looking at the teacher and repeating. If the learners have books, in many cases, they do not even look at the books, but look out the window or elsewhere in the class. In a few classes, we observed teachers trying to teach the syllables of words (teaching "tate," a two-syllable word meaning "father," as "ta-te,") but in general teachers do not seem to know how to teach reading. For example, one Grade 1 teacher proudly told us that she used to assess learners on words they had read in class. When she realized learners were "memorising" the words, she started giving them new words in assessments. This teacher was unaware of the whole language approach to learning to read. She did not know that "memorising" some words may be the way children begin to learn to read.

Another factor contributing to high failure rates is the lack of appropriate materials—which has an impact on teaching and learning methods. For whatever reasons, teachers do not have syllabi. They do have Schemes of Work, but these Schemes often are copied from the Schemes written by other teachers as much as fifteen years ago. The Schemes being used in the schools now may or may not match the texts teachers use. When the Schemes and texts differ, teachers usually follow the textbooks. The texts almost always include material not listed in the syllabi as appropriate for a certain Grade, but because teachers have no other guide, they follow the text. Because all the teachers lack current guides to the curriculum and how to teach it, there is no pass/fail pattern associated with having appropriate materials.

Materials for learners are also problematic, and influence the way teachers teach. If there is a class of 70 learners and the teacher has only 30 books, the books often are not used, because teachers feel like they must have a book for each learner. As a result, everything the teacher does must be written on the board or simply read aloud. A shortage, and in some cases a complete absence of, exercise books, also changes the way teachers teach and learners learn. Without exercise books, notes cannot be taken, homework and class work must be done on scraps of paper (which are subsequently lost), and neither the teacher nor the learner has any record of learner progress.

Another factor influencing teacher method and pass/fail could be called teacher dedication. One Principal said that the teachers in the lower Grades think that they can "sit back and rest," rather than teaching, because the lower Grades are easy to teach, or not as important as the higher grades. According to Principals, teachers, and parents, some teachers (both qualified and unqualified), are not committed to the job, and do not seem to care whether learners learn. We did find teachers who fit this description, teachers who are absent frequently, who drink during school hours, and who simply do not teach when they are in the classroom.

The relationship between teacher dedication and pass/fail is unclear. Some teachers who appear quite committed to their work pass large numbers of learners. Others, like the teacher her Principal called "selective," are dedicated, but fail over half the learners. Teachers who are not committed to their work may pass many learners, fail many learners, or some years pass many and other years pass few learners.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WHAT IS TAUGHT AND ASSESSMENT

What learners are taught and assessed on in each grade varies widely (depending on the text used, the Scheme of Work available, teacher capacities, the teacher's sense of what learners must know at the end of the year, and so on). This discussion will focus on Grade 1.

Most teachers and Principals had a difficult time describing what learners must know in order to be promoted (basic competencies). They answered that the MEC decides such things, or that the learners must know what is in a reading book, or they looked for their Schemes of Work to explain. It is clear that teachers do not think in terms of basic competencies for each grade.

For Grade 1, expectations within, but especially across schools, vary greatly. For instance in some schools, for the Home Language or Medium of Instruction, learners are promoted if they can name the letters of the alphabet (teachers said they were told in a workshop to use this as the sole criterion for pass/fail). In other schools, learners had to be able to read and write the equivalent of a sentence such as, "Mother is cooking soft porridge." In Maths for Grade 1, some teachers expect learners to know how to count from 1 - 50 (only) in order to be promoted. Other teachers expect learners to know shapes, comparisons (larger, smaller), and the four operations (including division of numbers up to 10, such as 10/2).

Learners do not learn the same material at each school, nor are they expected to have similar basic competencies. Some teachers have unrealistically high expectations of learners (such as being able to do division in Grade 1), and others have expectations far below competencies learners should have (according to information in the syllabi). The learner who passes at one school would not pass at another school, and the learner who fails at one school would pass at another, simply based on expected competencies.

As discussed in the previous section, Assessment and Promotion Guidance from the

MEC, assessment procedures vary from CA to tests to exams, to combinations of all three. During exams week, one school was doing a combination of exams and the last mark for CA in the languages. In English assessment in Grade 2, the teacher put up sentences on the board [Note: she had a stack of NAMPEP books in the cupboard, but did not use a book to guide her in writing these sentences]:

> "Look this chart:
>
> Maria likes sweet, meat and dogs.
> She does not likes snakes.
>
> Otto likes meat.
> She does not likes sweets, snakes, and dogs."

The teacher read through the sentences twice, with learners repeating after her. Then she had learners come up to the board individually to try to read the sentences. One girl out of about 30 learners got some of the words in the first sentence correct. The rest of the learners could not read any of the words.

In the interview, we asked the teacher whether the learners had done well in that CA. She said they got "just E's and F's because they didn't read good." The teacher said she was surprised they had done so poorly, but that they were used to repeating the same lesson more often than they had repeated that one. Asked whether they had seen all those words before, the teacher said that they had seen "Otto" and "Maria" and "meat" before, but that "snake and other words were strange to them." Asked if the learners can read in English, the teacher said "some can."

Quite apart from the fact that this teacher has problems with English and did not use a book to guide her in making up sentences, she was testing the learners on material they had not learned. Further, it was clear that most of the learners in that class do not know how to read in their Home Language either (having observed another CA as well).

There may be a connection between what is taught and assessment—from the teacher's point of view. However, there often is no connection between what learners have actually learned, and what they are assessed on. Teachers think they are teaching learners to read, when learners are actually only learning to listen and repeat after the teacher. When teachers are tested in reading, they do poorly.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

(See the previous chapter, MEC Assessment and Promotion Guidance, for more detail).

Teachers use a combination of oral and written work in class, on tests, and on exams. Although the research team tried to get descriptions of classroom evaluation and copies of tests or exams given, we were generally unsuccessful. Many teachers either could not tell us what they did, or did not keep copies of tests/exams or did not want to show us these materials.

More than one Principal doubts his teachers' methods of assessment. One Principal said that a teacher who missed the exams week in school, does not use any evaluation, but "guesses" on assessment. Another Principal said that some teachers lose exams papers or simply do not mark them, and so they just give learners symbols based on whether they like learners.

DETERMINATION OF PASS/FAIL: PROMOTION SUBJECTS, PERCENTAGES, SYMBOLS, THE CRITERIA FOR PASS/FAIL

(See the previous chapter, MEC Assessment and Promotion Guidance, for more detail).

The following is a summary of findings regarding the mechanics of determining pass/fail:

- Teachers and Principals use different promotion subjects and few of them know or follow MEC policy.
- Teachers use different percentages and symbols as the cut-off mark for pass/fail.
- Teachers often use total marks instead of individual promotion subjects to decide pass/fail.
- Numerous teachers have trouble calculating minimum marks and learner percentages and averaging marks or symbols to get the end-of-year symbol for a subject.
- The criteria for pass/fail differ from school to school and teacher to teacher.

GUIDANCE IN ASSESSMENT: MEC DOCUMENTS AND ADVICE FROM THE CIRCUIT/REGIONAL OFFICES

Since the difficulties with Ministry documents (NIED Exams Circulars and the Curriculum Guide) are discussed at length in another section, this section will focus on the goodness of fit between the related forms, the Exams Schedules and Report cards, and the MEC policy documents.

Forms that do not match current MEC policy are being used in schools. The Exams Schedules, for instance, often list English as a promotion subject. Apart from listing subjects in the wrong category, the forms give no guidance on which subjects are to be filled in for promotion purposes. As a consequence, at schools where there is no copy of a NIED Exams circular, or where it is misunderstood or not used, teachers have only these Exams Schedules as guides to promotion policies.

In many cases, schools also have outdated report cards, with different scales for symbols on them. The scale on the left, below, is the MEC scale (applicable prior to the issue of

NIED 3/94). On the right is the scale used by one school.

MEC policy		School report card
80 - 100%	A	60% and above
70 - 79%	B	50 - 59%
60 - 69%	C	40 - 49%
50 - 59%	D	34 - 39%
40 - 49%	E	(no E symbol listed)
34 - 39%	F	30 - 33%
0 - 33%	FF	up to 29%

Schools use different scales and promotion subjects and this contributes to a higher or lower pass rate.

RELATING FINDINGS TO THE LITERATURE

This section draws on literature discussed more fully in the following chapter.

Definitions and Applications of Non-Promotion

There is a wide range of opinions and evidence on what failure means, who is responsible for it and how it happens in the schools. Failure is an integral part of the education system and has been part of the system for many years, as one parent made clear when asked whether schools would have any reason not to try to reduce failure. She said, "Because it has always been that way." In at least one school, patterns of failure are being changed deliberately, by changing the marks of learners on Exams Schedules to ensure that most learners pass. In other schools, pass rates are erratic, and elsewhere, pass rates are low or high, as they have been for years. Whether failure is achieved in the same ways as it was pre-independence is not clear.

As hypothesized, the phenomenon of failure is socially produced. Institutional norms and policies and individual beliefs and practices interact to produce failure, and different dynamics operate in each of the twelve schools visited.

Benefits and consequences of non-promotion and repetition?

Interviewees' perceptions of the benefits of failure and repetition were mixed. One teacher said that learners who are repeating Grade 1 for the third or fourth time are wasting their time, because they will only be taught the same things again. Nevertheless, this teacher continues to fail learners. At another school, Grade 1A is used as a kind of kindergarten, and Grade 1B is like first grade, and both teachers of Grade 1 said that learners in 1B class did better. These learners in 1B were, for the most part, repeaters. We do not have a reliable measure of differences in achievement for first-time learners and repeaters at Lower Primary. One or two learners who were repeating a grade said that they were learning more the second time. One girl who was repeating Grade 2 for the third time said that she was not learning anything new, but was tired of being in Grade 2.

Most learners who failed said they felt "bad," and many were angry with themselves for having failed. Only one or two learners said that the teacher "made me fail." Fewer than half of those learners interviewed who had failed were laughed at by other learners, but most were punished by their parents (ranging from not being fed for a day or two, to having to work on the farm, to not being bought new clothing). Perhaps one fourth of the learners who had failed received extra help from parents or teachers after failing.

The literature from the United States and other countries indicates that learners who repeat a grade are likely to drop out of school. This connection between dropout and failure seems to hold for Namibia as well, though a more systematic study would be needed to have confidence in the connection. One mother said of her daughter, who was 15 years old and repeating in Grade 3, that she wanted her daughter to stay in school, but "her body would not let her." The parent explained that it is hard for learners who are older to be in classes with younger learners, and that her daughter was beginning to lose interest in school.

Factors in pass/fail rates

Some of the factors suggested by the literature do not seem to be operating in Namibia. Age may well be a factor in pass/fail decisions, but does not have a consistent and strong effect. We found at one school that the Inspector passed a few learners to the next grade in the middle of the year because they are overage. This tendency to pass learners who are overage may operate more generally in the system. Underage learners often are not registered, so they do not actually fail, but simply return to Grade 1 the next year. A number of teachers and Principals whose children had failed said that they might have failed because they were "too young" for the grade, although these teachers seemed to suggest this possibility after saying that they had no idea why their children had failed. In at least one school, teachers said the younger learners do better than the older ones, as the older learners started school late, "know nothing" and are bigger discipline problems. The study did not involve a systematic examination of the relationship between age and pass/fail, and can only conclude that the beliefs about the relationship between age and pass/fail vary from person to person and community to community.

Ethnicity was mentioned as a factor at only one school, where the Principal claimed that the parents did not like him because he is of another ethnic group. This position was called into question, however, when the research team heard from the Inspector and a number of parents that the problem with the Principal is his alcoholism and lack of devotion to the school. Far more influential was language group. In the schools with large numbers of Angolan learners, there are high failure rates particularly in Grades 1 and 2. Teachers said learners who speak Angolan languages at home have an especially hard time in the Medium of Instruction, but also in other subjects because of language difficulties, but that by Grade 3 or so, these learners have caught up to the rest of the learners.

Family factors

The distance from the home to school seems to have some influence on absenteeism. A few learners said that they stay home on Fridays because they are tired after walking back and forth to school for the rest of the week. Yet close proximity to the school does not seem to make it more likley that learners will attend. Absenteeism does not appear to be gender-related, as no one mentioned keeping girls home out of concern for their safety. In short, absenteeism seems to be motivated by various other factors such as satisfaction with school and relationships with parents and teachers. And, as stated earlier, learners who miss a lot of school do not necessarily fail.

The wealth of parents does not seem to be a large factor in pass/fail, nor does parents' level of education. Parents' support in terms of feeding children in the morning and allowing them time to do work at home were perceived by interviewees as more influential than level of education or wealth, though these factors are not unrelated. The parental attitude toward the value of schooling was, almost without exception, very positive even if parents' actions were less supportive of education. Parents value education highly, even when failure is extraordinarily high. Several uneducated parents wistfully said they wished they were young again so they could go to school. At the same time, the opportunity costs for learners' time is high in many cases. When the costs are highest, learners miss school to work in the fields, tend cattle, or take care of younger siblings.

Teacher and school factors

The literature suggests that teachers who are absent often fail more learners than other teachers. In some schools this seemed to be the case, with parents telling stories of irresponsible teachers who are absent or lose test papers and then fail many learners. Other Principals and teachers, however, said that teachers who do not teach, whether because they are absent or lazy or unskilled, "push through" many learners to make the Principal think they are doing good work and to avoid parental disapproval.

The literature suggests that the quality of inputs such as physical facilities, books, and so on, influence pass/fail. Our study, however, focussed on schools in which the correlation between school inputs and pass/fail was not as expected. In the twelve schools, we found that inputs are a factor in constraining teaching methods and what can be done in schools, but not necessarily influencing pass/fail.

It was hypothesized that when there was a bottleneck, such as two Grade 1 teachers with many learners, and only one Grade 2 class for Grade 1 learners to go into, there might be pressures from the Principal and/or the Grade 2 teacher not to pass many learners in Grade 1. In the interviews, no teachers or Principals seemed to have considered pass rates in those terms. One Principal said that if learners pass, they must go on to the next grade. Principals seem to hold out hope for another teaching post, even when they have been told for a couple of years now that there are no new posts available. One school has 106 learners in one Grade 1 class, and has only one Grade 2 teacher—who happens to be the Principal. When asked what he would do if all the learners passed Grade 1, the Principal laughed, said it would be impossible, then said that he would give the learners another test to "find out which ones should have passed."

- A factor discussed only briefly in the literature is the inconsistent application of Ministry policies. This factor has many facets and is very influential in determining pass/fail, as discussed at length earlier in the report.

Finally, in Namibia parents rarely consider teachers as contributing to failure. Instead, in general, parents, Principals, teachers and learners tend to blame learners for failure.

SUMMARY: WHY LEARNERS ARE PASSED OR FAILED

This sub-section is entitled not "why learners pass or fail," but "why they are passed or failed," because pass/fail has less to do with learners' performance in class than with the beliefs, norms and processes that decide pass/fail. To measure the influence of each factor on pass/fail decisions is probably impossible, in part because so many factors interact with one another, to combine for high, low, or erratic pass rates. It is possible, however, to list what seem like major factors in determining whether learners pass or fail in the 12 schools studied.

1. Beliefs about pass/fail both shape and are shaped by the pass rate at the school.

2. Parents' attitudes toward school and their help or hindrance of children affect pass rates. There is not a clear relationship between parents' level of education and pass/fail for their children.

3. Underage learners who are registered at schools are more likely to fail than learners of school age.

4. The causes and effects of absenteeism cannot be summarised neatly, except to say that a learner who misses more than half the days in a term is more likely to fail than a learner who is absent fewer days.

5. Poor teaching methods and the lack of connection between what is learned and what is assessed contribute to failure.

6. It is not possible to say that a teacher's commitment to teaching and to the education of learners results in higher pass rates.

7. The relationship between learner achievement and pass/fail appears to be weak, partly because of the great differences in teacher expectations of basic competencies.

8. A lack of information, materials and guidance on curricula, assessment, and promotion procedures, results in significant mistakes in determining pass/fail for large numbers of learners.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to describe the policies and processes that lead to learners passing or failing in Grades 1 to 3 by explaining how assessment happens in the schools and how that assessment is translated into pass/fail. It became clear in the course of the study that the system is not working as intended. There is little useful communication within and between the Head and Regional Offices on policy formation and reform related to this area. Policies are not understood or implemented at the Regional Office and schools. Teachers do not receive materials and training needed to do learner-centred teaching and assessment or to make promotion decisions. Learners are being failed for reasons that have little or nothing to do with achievement. Likewise, many learners pass without achieving basic competencies.

Furthermore, many interviewees blame learners for failure, even though learners are not being taught, or are not being assessed on what they are taught, or are failing due to improper promotion procedures. Arguing that learners alone, or learners and teachers together, are responsible for failure, is not accurate and will likely lead to the simplistic response of telling learners and teachers to "learn hard" and "teach hard." A realization of the systemic problems is essential to reforming the pass/fail decision-making process.

The recommendations below are suggestions of ways to bring pass/fail practices in line with policies and to make pass/fail more closely related to achievement. Because in these twelve schools there are so many instances of high pass rates that are explained not by high achievement but by the misapplication of promotion practices or other factors, these recommendations are not simply intended to raise the pass rates.

The following are suggestions on how to go about considering the recommendations for ways to improve assessment in the schools:

1. Be informed about the procedures, attitudes, and practices from previous dispensations that influence the way new policies are implemented;

2. Focus on how positive change can be made, rather than assigning blame/credit for failure to individuals;

3. In policy-making, curriculum development, and so on, do not assume what the situation is/should be in the schools, but do research to find out what is going on and why.

The recommendations vary in their difficulty of implementation. Some recommendations are costly in terms of time or money, or difficult in terms of coordinating levels of the Ministry. In this report, the recommendations are not prioritized, as it is expected that the MEC will discuss the recommendations and set priorities for action.

COMMUNICATION

1. Improve communication within the Head Office, and between the Head Office and the Regional Offices, regarding:

- policies made
- usefulness of documents and circulars
- dissemination and use of documents
- reasons for non-implementation

2. Increase Regional Office contact with remote schools in:

- implementation of policies
- training needs
- feedback on problems

POLICY

1. Continuous Assessment:

- Clarify that CA has been the policy for many years.
- Develop a common definition of CA.
- Be clear on the rationale for CA.
- Decide how CA is to be implemented, given available human and other resources.

2. Be sure what is happening in schools informs promotion policy changes.
3. Consider the costs of the policy of allowing repetition only once per grade and once per phase in Grades 1 to 3.
4. Evaluate the costs of rationalization to regional operations.
5. Re-evaluate the value and objectives of inspection services as they now operate.

DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS

Distribution

1. Distribute current syllabi to schools.
2. Take current NIED Exams circulars to schools.
3. Deliver new Exams circulars at the beginning of the year (not in August).

Revision

1. Revise syllabi or add basic competencies to old syllabi before new syllabi are available.
2. Revise Exams Schedules for each grade to make clear how to determine pass/fail using only the promotion subjects.

3. Include on Exams Schedules an explanation of the pass requirements.
4. Use clear language in NIED Exams Circulars.
5. 'Pretest' all Circulars in schools to find out what is difficult to understand.
6. Revise Circulars before finalising and distributing them.

Production

1. Adapt or produce understandable, clear, practical guides to assessment.
2. Produce syllabi that can be used with texts currently used (or new texts) in the schools.

TRAINING

Basic Competencies

1. Help teachers, Principals, and Regional Office personnel understand current syllabi and basic competencies.
2. Standardise basic competencies in schools.

Continuous Assessment

3. Train Principals, teachers and Regional Office personnel in how to do CA.
4. Have workshops to monitor CA and to assist schools.

Teaching Methodology

5. Train Principals and teachers in teaching methodology.
6. Train Principals and teachers in the connection between teaching and assessment.

Change the Culture of Failure

7. Change the culture/norms of failure in schools to reduce failure.
8. Educate Principals, teachers, and parents on the factors contributing to failure, including absenteeism.
9. Explain to educators the various costs of failure and why failure should be reduced.
10. Discuss acceptable means of raising the pass rate.

Implementation and Revision of Promotion Policies

11. Train Principals and teachers at schools in implementing NIED Exams circulars. (averages, how to decide symbols...)
12. Use feedback from workshops to revise documents.
13. Train Inspectors to monitor promotion policies.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following discussion is based on a brief review of literature available to the author over a very short period of time. It is by no means comprehensive and suffers from a lack of references from the African context. However, many of the observations from this incomplete review are still useful in understanding the Namibian situation and for this reason it is included here.

DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF NON-PROMOTION

Questions considered at the outset of the study included the following concerns. Who defines failure and how is it negotiated and operationalized? Is failure an individual matter, or a school and social responsibility? Is failure in the nature of the system (McDermott, 1974; cited in Papagiannis, Bickel and Fuller, 1983) as it is presently organized, or is it a relic of the old regime in Namibia? Is failure being redefined in independent Namibia? How does failure happen? Is failure a "rational response to more or less accurate assessments of investing time, money, effort, self-esteem, and identity in educational attainment"? (Papagiannis et. al., 1983, p. 379).

To begin with a definition, failure is the condition of not being promoted to the next grade. Failure is socially defined, both through institutional norms and rules, and through individual beliefs and practices (Papagiannis, et. al., 1983). It is defined differently, justified by various means, and implemented more or less rigorously, according to social and economic context, and failure is set up as the opposite of success—or of passing the grade. Responsibility for non-promotion can be attributed to the individual student, or to institutional structures and power relations or both.

The determination of failure policies is a negotiated process, and is rarely clear-cut. Selden (1982) and others have noted that the debate over promotion policies and their implementation, is value-based, meaning that it is based on beliefs about student learning, educators' effectiveness in teaching and remediation, and the tradeoffs between flexibility and standardization (cited in Christman and Pugh, 1989). It was expected that there would be a range of views on the policies and processes of promotion within and between the Ministry, the Regional Offices, the communities and the schools. The actual practice of promotion and non-promotion is a complex process, perhaps drawing on policy but implemented locally. While the decision processes in Namibia are undoubtedly distinct from those in the United States and elsewhere, the debates over the use of failure policies in schools, can illuminate the situation in Namibia.

POPULAR JUSTIFICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC NON-PROMOTION AS POLICY

While virtually no research agrees, supporters of failure policies maintain their usefulness on both child-development and institutional grounds. Some education practitioners defend strict standards with the argument that students are motivated to work harder by the fear of failure and that students who fail are given the time to acquire skills needed in higher grades (Tomchin and Impara, 1992). Byrnes (1989) lists language proficiency, attitude, work habits, attendance, conduct and maturity as other factors influencing the decision to fail a student.

In general, American society favors non-promotion as an option, and even teachers who rarely fail students support non-promotion as policy, disputing the research that finds no benefit to non-promotion. Policies on minimum standards are often made by school boards in response to community demands for higher standards. Other advantages of these policies are that, in addition to satisfying the public, they are easy to implement and do not disrupt the organization of the school (Byrnes, 1989).

THE BENEFITS OF FAILURE?

Smith (1989), in interviews with kindergarten teachers, reports that teachers in a school are likely to share beliefs and practices. Some schools retain as much as one-third of kindergartners, others only one to two percent. These differences are not explained by socio-economic status (SES), cognitive ability, minority percentage, teacher background or ability. Teachers who believe failing students is beneficial, listed the reported effects: students who are retained later 'bloom' or develop leadership potential, are more comfortable socially and academically, cooperate more fully, and have greater achievement. They argue that failure, when followed by repetition, reduces frustration, stress, and the chances of future retention. These teachers saw no stigma attached to failure, and told 'disaster' stories of students who should not have been promoted, but were.

Most research does not support the effectiveness of non-promotion (Holmes and Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Smith and Shepard, 1987; cited in Mantzicopoulos and Morrison, 1992). There is little evidence that students who are held back for social reasons (immaturity, discipline problems) or those retained for poor academic achievement benefit from non-promotion. Gains in academic achievement studied in students repeating kindergarten did not continue beyond that grade (Mantzicopoulos and Morrison, 1992). Rather, retention does not solve the problems it is meant to address, and is linked to negative self-concepts, negative attitudes toward school, and dropout rates higher than in non-repeater populations (Byrnes and Yamamoto, 1986; Grissom and Shepard, 1989; cited in Mantzicopoulos and Morrison, 1992).

There is the question of whether to compare repeaters with their age-mates who were promoted, or with first-time students in the same grade, and what these comparisons mean. Overman (1986) cites Rose's work suggesting "that only 20% to 35% of retained students learned more material during the second year in the same grade than they had learned the first time around," (p. 610).

In recent years, retention in kindergarten, or some equivalent variant such as pre-kindergarten or a transition class to first grade, has become widespread as practice in the U.S. The argument for early retention is that it is preventative (of future failure), and that it is not stigmatizing as is failure in later grades (Shepard, 1989). The studies that report positive effects lack longitudinal data and control groups. Also, there is no way of knowing whether these failed students would have done as well as their peers, had they been promoted.

Learners who do not pass a grade either drop out of school or repeat the grade. In the U.S. and elsewhere, controlling for SES and other factors, students who repeat a grade are more likely to drop out of school (Bossing and Brien, 1980; Doyle, 1989; Grissom and Shepard, 1989; Holloman, 1990; Moran, 1989; Nason, 1991; cited in Foster, 1993). High academic failure rates, and the "perceived threat of imminent failure," along with high opportunity costs, are cited as the reasons for school desertion in the Guatemala highlands (Carvajal, Morris and Davenport, 1993, p. 62).

Byrnes (1989) interviewed children in the U.S. who had been retained in grades 1 or 3, opening with the question: "Some students who need more time to learn spend another year in the same grade. Have you or any of the students in your class ever had that happen? (p. 115). Students immediately referred to 'flunking,' and said (if they admitted they had been retained) that they felt 'bad' or 'sad.' Students reported their parents' reactions as anger (involving punishment for the child), sadness, and acceptance.

While five percent of the students reported they liked their work better the second time in a grade, most of them saw nothing good in not being promoted, which they considered a punishment for not being good enough. Students were sensitive to their teachers' evaluations, even if they were unsure of the basis for evaluation. Byrnes paraphrases Edgerton (1967), concluding that "in a culture that places so much emphasis on what one (allegedly) has in, and does with, her or his brains, retention is indeed a particularly devastating indictment of a person's whole being" (p. 129).

The circumstances and meaning of failure, and probably students' reactions to it, differ in the U.S. and in Namibia. In the U.S., with compulsory schooling enforced through most of adolescence, failure does not allow dropping out as an option until at least some point in high school, so the chances that students retained once or twice will still learn are relatively good. There is a measure of certainty that all citizens will attain a certain grade level, if not a given level of achievement. In Namibia, students (despite a policy of compulsory schooling through age 16) may drop out much earlier. Dropout rates for Lower Primary, especially Grade 1, are very high. In 1992 - 1993 the national dropout rate was 3.2% in Grade 3, 5.4% in Grade 2, and 9.4% in Grade 1. Grade 1 dropout in the regions studied is higher than the national average. In Ondangwa East, Grade 1 dropout was 13.6%; in Ondangwa West, 7.6%; and in Rundu, 11.9%. The Grade 1 dropout rate for the nation is surpassed only by Grade 8 (10.2%) and Grade 10 (21.5%), with the latter being not dropout per se, but "push-out," or school leaving [source: Annual Education Census 1993].

HYPOTHESES FOR HIGH FAILURE RATES AND FACTORS AFFECTING DECISIONS ABOUT PROMOTION

The research design benefitted from a review of how other studies classified factors influencing promotion as well as what research has found to be factors influencing promotion. While Schwille et. al. (1991) were looking at the determinants of grade repetition, their typology may be applied to the factors affecting failure as well. They considered factors under national policies, student characteristics, and school characteristics. Relevant national policies include those on failure, repetition, and access and selection at various levels of the system. Apart from the letter of the policies, the intent of policies and oversight on policy implementation are important to investigate as well. A major contribution of the work by McGinn et. al. (1992) is the inclusion of different stakeholders' perceptions as these beliefs affect behaviour and help determine options for change.

What follows is a review of what the literature suggests are factors influencing decisions about promotion.

Student characteristics

Student characteristics include sex, ethnicity, age, place of residence, family influence, prior experience with school failure, aptitudes, and perceived opportunities for work. It is assumed that each of these factors does not have the same effect on the supply of and demand for education in all regions and schools Namibia, because social conditions (for example, local valuation of schooling) and economic conditions (the nature of work and the labor market) differ from place to place. Nonetheless, plausible effects can be discussed.

Sex and Ethnicity

In every region of Namibia, for grades 1 to 3, the pass rates for girls are consistently higher than those for boys (in keeping with the pattern in the U.S., where significantly more boys than girls are retained; see, cited in Foster, 1993: Mantzicopoulos, Morrison, Hinshaw and Carte, 1989; House, 1989; Safer, Heaton, and Allen, 1977; Carstens, 1985). The reasons for this pattern are not clear.

This study hypothesizes that in various parts of the country, ethnicity and language group influence failure rates -- whether because of overt conflict between groups as expressed through schooling and the restriction of opportunity for given groups, or whether through choices about the language of instruction, which in heterogeneous communities necessarily slights some language groups. Learners from minority groups, particularly if they are poor, are more likely than those of locally dominant groups not to be promoted (House, 1989; Jackson, 1975; Shepard and Smith, 1989; cited in Foster, 1993).

Age of Learners in Grades 1 to 3, 1991

Region	Sex	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	% 8+ in Grade 1
Appropriate age		6.17	7.17	8.17	
Ondangwa	Male	8.2	10.5	12.5	52.5
	Female	7.9	9.9	11.6	47.7
	Both sexes	8.0	10.2	12.0	50.2
Rundu	Male	8.1	10.1	11.7	53.0
	Female	7.9	9.8	11.4	49.5
	Both sexes	8.0	9.9	11.5	51.3
NAMIBIA	Male	8.0	9.9	11.5	48.4
	Female	7.7	9.5	10.9	43.7
	Both sexes	7.9	9.7	11.2	46.1

Source: *EMIS Bulletin* (1993), Vol. 1, No. 2.

Age

For 1991, the average ages for boys and girls in grades 1 to 3 in Ondangwa and Rundu were above the national averages, and the percentage of students aged 8 and older in Grade 1 in each region also exceeded the national average.

These averages may obscure a very wide range in ages in the first three grades. While we know that repetition contributes to the overage learner phenomenon, what is unknown is whether learners who are overage are more likely to fail. Learners may be overaged because they have repeated, or they started school, dropped out and then dropped back in; or they may have started school late for any number of reasons; or they may have recently returned to school having dropped out during the struggle, or they may have recently returned from exile.

At the other end of the distribution, there may be underaged students who are enrolled in school early, to relieve the family of childcare, and with parental expectations that they repeat Grade 1 until they are ready to go on.

Place of residence and Family influence

The nearness of the home to school may be a factor in enrollment, absenteeism, persistence, and conceivably in failure rates (McGinn et. al., 1992). There may be a differential effect by gender, with parents less likely to send daughters to school far away from home, given the risk of molestation.

Watson-Gegeo (1992), in a study of child socialization in the Solomon Islands, describes the process by which many students in rural schools fail. As economic inequalities between rural and urban populations grow and urban schools secure greater resources than rural schools in a competitive labor market, the rural learners are disadvantaged. Educators and parents are aware of these processes, and parents become ambivalent about education: they want their children to do well and realize that school persistence and eventual success is unlikely. The "ambivalence is communicated directly and indirectly to children, undercutting children's motivation and confidence by communicating fear of failure, frustration with the system as it exists, and doubts about the value of the schooling" (p. 62).

In overall family influence on failure rates, there are countless factors to be considered: socioeconomic status (SES); attitudes toward the value of schooling and the opportunity costs of children's attendance (affected by parents' own schooling experiences, and those of learners' siblings); perceptions of what 'success' and 'failure' in schooling mean and how they are achieved; willingness and ability to support students economically and academically, and so on.

Learner Aptitudes

There is no standardized measure of achievement in grades 1 to 3, nor is there any measure of aptitudes (academic, social, etc.). The pass/fail decision-making process doubtless includes the estimation of learners' capacity to learn and their achievement in the grade, but the question is how those estimates are made, and how accurate they are or can be.

Other learner characteristics

Among other factors affecting failure rates are absenteeism (whether seasonal or persistent), in response to labor demands on the farm, and discipline problems (including, for example, drinking among older lower primary learners (who may be in their teens) and vandalism). Such personal characteristics are likely figured into teachers' determination of failure.

In a study by McGinn et. al. (1992) in Honduras, the researchers asked teachers to discuss learners in their classes and to comment on the probability that each one would pass the year, and on how far the learner would go in school. Teachers' responses are perhaps based on learners' performance, but also were correlated with students' SES, suggesting at the least that SES contributes to borderline decisions whether to pass or fail a student.

Teacher and School characteristics

McGinn et. al. (1992) found teachers were inconsistent in the application of Ministry rules on grading and passing/failure. Not all students whose marks were high enough were passed. Also, there was wide variation in the length of the school day and year.

Teachers who were absent more days in the year failed students at a higher rate than teachers with high attendance.

Relevant school characteristics include the quality of instruction; the connection between learner assessment and promotion practices; teacher absenteeism; and compliance with national policies (Schwille et. al., 1991). In some schools, the educational experience may be of low quality, meaning that there are insufficient and inappropriate materials, inadequate facilities, and ineffective instruction. The school may have inadequate capacity—in terms of facilities, materials, and teachers—to handle the number of students enrolled. Depending on the formula for financing education, it may be beneficial to the school to have students' names on the list, but not to be concerned whether the students attend classes.

In a situation in which Grade 1 enrolment rates are increasing, second and third grade teachers might pressure Grade 1 teachers to pare down classes so that they will be manageable, and more homogeneous in ability and other characteristics (for more on this motivation for failing students in U.S. schools, see Foster, 1993); lower primary teachers might not address signs of imminent failure in students because losing some students increases the human and material resources available to the rest of the students.

Community characteristics

Along with the factors suggested by Schwille et. al., community attitudes and actions should be considered in the social construction of failure. If people in the community do not see much difference between the benefits of a Grade 1 and Grade 3 or 7 education, and if educators agree, failing students early on in their education may be seen as a benefit. The perceived benefit lies in sparing learners and families the opportunity costs of years of education, when it is assumed that the learners will drop out at some point, or fail to be admitted to secondary schools.

The inverse view is also possible. If the MEC has persuaded communities that failure is not good policy, but there is a difference between the community view and the school view (where failure is seen as beneficial institutionally and to the students themselves), there may well be conflict in the perception of the costs and benefits of failure.

Perceptions of factors contributing to failure

McGinn et. al. (1992) interviewed Honduran Ministry officials, school principals, rural school teachers, and parents to find out perceptions on why students fail. Responses are grouped as family factors, student factors, system factors, and teacher factors. Ministry officials cited poverty and malnutrition as family factors; bureaucratic responsibilities of teachers, lack of a generalized evaluation system, and infrequent and poor supervision of teachers as system factors; and poor teaching strategies, lack of interest in work, and inability to motivate students as teacher factors.

School principals listed poverty, use of children in work, and parents' lack of interest in schooling as family factors; student absenteeism and low ability to learn as student factors; and lack of interest in work as a teacher factor. Teachers cited parents' low interest in schooling and uses of children in work as family factors; and absenteeism and low ability to learn as student factors. Parents listed students not learning what they should have learned, and absenteeism as student factors; and did not list teacher factors in the equation.

In keeping with the modernization model of development, and the view of 'unsuccessful' students and workers as having personal deficits, the student is often credited with the responsibility for failure. McGinn maintains that attributing failure to the individual student is blaming the victim, as a student's failure to learn is the school's failure to teach effectively (1992, p. iii).

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Passing and Failing Learners:
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VOLUME II

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for the
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Introduction to Volume II

Volume II contains individual case study reports for the twelve schools that participated in the study, Passing and Failing Learners: Policies and Practices in Ondangwa and Rundu in Grades 1 to 3. The first six reports are for schools in the Ondangwa East and West regions and the last six are for schools in the Rundu region. The names of people in the case studies have been changed to keep their identity confidential.

These reports, complemented by Head and Regional office interviews not recorded here, form the basis for the findings reported in Volume I. The first volume is a synthesis while Volume II represents the "raw" data. The case studies are provided to help ground the reader in real life school settings. The processes and practices are easier to understand when placed in the school context. Each case study provides numerous specific examples of attitudes and behaviours. It is hoped that these case studies will be used in training purposes as well as for stimulating discussion and catalyzing action.

The individual school reports have a common organisation. Each report first provides the reader with a little background information on the school and the community it serves. This is followed by a discussion of the beliefs about pass/fail and perceptions of factors influencing pass/fail as held by the principal, teachers, learners and parents. Information on parental involvement in school and parent-school relations is presented next. Learner characteristics are presented in section 4 of each report. This is followed by a report on the quality of the educational experience, including the relationship between what is taught and what is assessed. Section 6 reports on the school's access to and use of information on curriculum and assessment as well as the implicit "basic competencies" being employed by teachers. The mechanics of determining the pass/fail mark are explored in the next section, followed by a report on interviewee's ideas on how to raise pass rates. Section 9 focuses on the issues of cooperation, coordination and communication from the school's perspective. Each report ends with suggested recommendations for improving the situation found at that school.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 1

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	71%	74%	85%
2	85%	69%	75%
3	70%	65%	85%

Two out of three of the classes Grades 1 - 3 are taught by unqualified teachers -- yet the pass rates are high. Class sizes are large (from 60 to 80, in 1992), and one-fourth of the classrooms are traditional structures. Based on these school inputs, we expected pass rates to be modest. This school was chosen to investigate the factors in producing high pass rates.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Ms. Nangobe	12	2	19
Grade 1	Ms. Kuwa	11	2	2
Grade 2	Mrs. Fikameni	8	none	21
Grade 3	Mrs. Ileni	11	none	8

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is less than 100 kilometers from Oshakati. There are 16 teachers for about 800 learners in grades 1 to 10.

The Inspector told us that this school used to be the worst one in the circuit. The Principal is one of the best administrators, but is "achieving with thunder," rather than cooperatively. The Inspector advised her not to be like a lion, which people would try to kill, and warned her that people in the community and teachers were slandering her.

There is a group of four or five kuka shops no more than ten meters from the school fence. According to parents, some teachers go to the kuka shops to drink during school hours. The Principal complained to us about the kuka shops being so close to the school, and about having no way to stop the building of more shops.

There are two toilets for 800 learners. They are not pit latrines, but rather zinc shacks with only a level place for learners to use. The Principal, when she found out that the research team had been using these toilets, suggested we use the facilities at her business, one of the kuka shops. I have to wonder whether her indignation over the kuka shops has more to do with competitors taking away her own business, than the welfare of the school. The Inspector confirmed that the Principal owns one of the kuka shops, and that he, the Inspector, does what he can (from a distance) to keep learners from going there.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

Ms. Nangobe, the Principal, believes that "mostly the teachers are responsible for failure." Her impression is that parents believe teachers do not teach well, and that parents think that learners lack discipline.

Parents

Johanna Uusiku said that at this school many children fail, and few pass. Perhaps learners do not "learn hard" or maybe teachers make learners fail, by not marking correct answers right. She did not know whether these things happen at the school, but thinks it possible that they may. [Based on the numbers of learners passing in Grades 1 - 3, this parent is not well-informed about pass rates at the school].

Regina Kamati, said that teachers who are bad and lazy cannot teach, and cause many children to fail. These teachers promote only the children of relatives and friends. The teacher who did these things the most is gone now, she said. Ms. Kamati added that in the lower Grades fewer learners fail.

Sesilia Paulus, a parent, believes children fail because they don't listen to teachers and play instead of working.

At this school, compared with other schools, there is a greater inclination to credit teachers with causing failure. At many other schools, parents tend to blame learners and not teachers at all.

Learners

Learners at this school take responsibility for their own failure. None of the seven learners interviewed faulted anyone besides him/herself for failure.

Wilhelm, who is 9 years old and in Grade 1, said that learners fail because they make a lot of noise and don't know anything.

Fillemon, age 7, and in Grade 1, said that learners fail because they don't know Maths and handwriting.

Frans, who is 11 years old and in Grade 2, failed Grade 2 last year. He passed all subjects except for English, so he failed.

Tomas, who is 8 years old and in Grade 2, failed Grade 1 at another school because "I didn't know anything, Kwanyama, Maths or handwriting," and "I was taught but I just couldn't make it."

Sussana, a Grade 3 learner, age 9, was told by a teacher that learners fail because they fail English and Ndonga reading.

Priska, who is 10 years old and in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they don't know their subjects and are absent a lot. They also fail because they do not raise their hands to answer questions when the teacher asks them.

Julia, who is 9 years old and in Grade 3, failed Grade 3 last year because "I did not learn hard," and was absent a lot. She missed school to look after a younger sister and sometimes stayed away "for no reason."

Placing Blame for Failure

Parents

Parents at this school seem not to blame learners, at least in the pejorative sense, for failure. Learners are involved in the process by which they fail, but are not solely responsible for failure.

Emilia Iipinge, felt bad when her daughter failed at another school, but blamed no one because that school used a medium of instruction that is not her daughter's first language. If her daughter failed again, she would blame her.

Rosina Shikongo, whose children have not failed, said that many parents blame children for failure, but parents are also responsible for what happens, because they do not consult schools early on to find out how their children are doing.

Hilia Negongo said that her child failed Grade 3 because he dodged some exams.

Justina Endjala said that her son has failed Grade 3 three times. She does not know why exactly, saying that "he just can't make it."

Sesilia Paulus blames her daughter's failure in Grade 2 on herself. Sesilia used to make her daughter stay at home with a younger sister while she went to sell fat cakes. This year, Sesilia does not have her daughter miss school to take care of her sister.

Those Learners Passing Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Ms. Kuwa, the Grade 1 teacher, could not guess how many learners (out of 73) will pass this year, because many will be absent in September and October, for lack of food at home. During those months, she may have only 10 children in class, and most of the others will return the following year to repeat Grade 1.

In her Grade 2 class, Mrs. Fikameni expects 36 of 43 to pass (84%) at the end of the year. Learners are improving, especially when other learners laugh at them for making mistakes.

Mrs. Ileni, the Grade 3 teacher, guesses that 42 out of 54 will pass (78%). She is not satisfied with this number, wishing that only 3 or 4 should fail.

These expected pass rates are very similar to pass rates of the last few years.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

The Principal said that it is not possible for a whole class to pass because learners have different talents. She believes more should pass than fail, but not all can pass.

The Grade 1 teacher, Ms. Kuwa, agrees that it is impossible for all learners to pass.

Mrs. Fikameni, the Grade 2 teacher, said that it has never happened that all the learners have passed in a class in the lower primary Grades. She added, "I have never seen such a miracle."

The Grade 3 teacher, Mrs. Ileni, believes it is possible for a whole class to pass, as her class did in 1992. In fact, that year, all learners in both Grade 3 classes passed. She said that the other teachers were proud of her.

Frans, a Grade 2 learner, believes it is impossible for all of a class to pass because some don't listen in class.

Interestingly, the Principal and two teachers say it is impossible for all learners to pass, despite the fact that one year in which all these staff members were at the school, 1992, all Grade 3 learners passed.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Ms. Kuwa, the Grade 1 teacher, said that few parents come to school. They are invited to meetings, but do not come. No parents have ever come to observe her teaching class. Ms. Kuwa added that it is hard to know whether parents care about schooling, as few come to school the last day to get reports. At other schools, parents come, but here only 4 parents did.

Mrs. Ileni, the Grade 3 teacher, said that parents are more involved this year than in the past.

Johanna Uusiku, a parent, does not know whether there is a parent-teacher organization (PTO), but she comes to parents meetings twice a year. At these meetings, absenteeism and other problems are discussed. She has never visited the classroom, but would like to do so if she were invited.

Regina Kamate, a parent, attends parents meetings and makes class visits. She visits classes "on my own because my children could not tell me anything about the lessons they had that day." She visits the school twice a month because children never improve unless parents come to school to check on them.

Rosina Shikongo, a parent, visits the school often, uninvited, to find out how her son in Grade 1 is doing. She believes the teacher is good.

Justina Endjala, a parent, has never visited the school, apart from attending parents meetings. She said "I didn't know it was necessary." Sesilia Paulus said much the same thing.

Parents are interested in the school, as shown by their visits to classes. The school, however, does not seem to encourage visits.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

Regina Kamate, who is the school committee treasurer, said that the parents called a meeting to ask why learners fail. The teachers refused to come to the meeting. Finally the meeting was held and teachers said they did not know why learners failed except that learners "don't learn." The learners told their parents that the teachers are not serious about teaching.

Emilia Iipinge, a parent, said that the School Committee was not functioning because there had been a conflict between the parents and teachers.

Rosina Shikongo said some teachers have problems with the Principal because she is a woman and because the Principal had a fight with the Grade 2 teacher's husband, who used to be a teacher at the school.

Hilia Negongo said that relations between parents and teachers are good, except for those teachers who drink and cannot teach.

Justina Endjala said that one teacher who owns a kuka shop gives the keys to other teachers, who then return to school drunk. The Principal has tried to get parents to help stop the problem but it continues.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

The Grade 1 teacher, Ms. Kuwa, said that the Grade 2 teachers sometimes complain that the learners who pass Grade 1 are not ready for Grade 2 because they cannot read and write. Grade 2 teachers have sent children back to Grade 1, though they passed in the Grade 1 teacher's judgment. The Grade 1 teacher said that maybe the learners forget everything over vacations or cannot understand the other teacher. She sometimes refuses to take the learners back.

For Ms. Kuwa, readiness is a question of age. Learners under age 6 are sent home.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Most learners interviewed take books home and are helped by relatives. Sussana (Grade 3) does not take books home, but is helped by her sister at home. Wilhelm (Grade 1) takes books home and is helped by his Grandmother.

Frans, a learner in Grade 2, started taking books home after failing Grade 2, and he is taught by his mother, the only one who can read at home.

Priska who is in Grade 3, takes books home, and is encouraged by her mother to be the best student in Grade 3. Female relatives help her.

Fillemon, who is in Grade 1, does not take books home.

Quality of Teaching and School

Learners, by and large, consider a teacher good if the teacher does not beat them. Sussana, who is in Grade 3, says her teacher is good because she does not beat learners. Her teacher also teaches them poems, laughs a lot and likes teaching the class.

Wilhelm, who is in Grade 1, said his teacher is good because she does not beat them and lets them make noise in class.

Fillemon, a learner in Grade 1, said his teacher is good because she does not beat learners. Tomas, who is in Grade 2, said the same thing of his teacher.

Frans, in Grade 2, said the teacher is good but she beats the learners.

Julia said her teacher in Grade 3 is good because "she tries to help me."

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

What Learners Are Taught in Each Grade

Grades 1 - 3: teaching is based on textbooks, not on syllabi.
In Grade 2, the teacher has a full set of books, but did not use them the lessons we observed. Instead, the learners watched the teacher and listened to her reading from the book, then repeated after her.

Basic Competencies

Ms. Nangobe, the Principal, said that in Grade 1, where there are many learners, "sometimes learners pass but the standard is not as high" as in other years. The teacher's idea of what must be mastered by a learner before he or she passes, changes over time. Ms. Nangobe added that "many pass who know nothing," and that this is a factor in failure in later Grades.

Ms. Kuwa said that in order to pass Grade 1, learners must be able to do the following in these subjects:

English: read short sentences such as "Mother cooks the meat," and individual words such as "boy, door, table, chair;" also, take dictation of those words.

Maths: word problems such as 3 oranges - 1 orange, or "I had 5 chickens, one died, so how many are left?"

The teachers in Grades 2 and 3 did not explain basic competencies.

Teaching Methods

The sounds of choral repetition are heard from most classes. Observations from one of the classes are recorded here.

Grade 2 English lesson: The teacher is the only one with a book. She reads words and calls learners to the board to write. When a learner writes "bays" instead of "buys," the teacher taps him on the head and writes the word herself. Mrs. Fikameni does not explain what mistake he made, nor does she make clear the difference in the sounds of the vowels. A learner is called to write "Silas," and he writes "S" like the mirror image of the letter. The teacher tells him to sit down. Several other learners try, cannot write the word correctly.

The teacher says to different learners, "If you don't pay attention in class and to what others are writing on the board, you'll never know anything." She encourages learners to laugh at one of the boys who miswrote "Silas." The correct way to write "S" is not shown. The teacher threatens to beat more than one child.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Training in Assessment and Methods of Assessment

Mrs. Ileni has had no training in assessment. She was told by other teachers how to handle learners of different abilities, how to do work, and to keep some learners after class for extra work. Other teachers did not describe how they came to learn about assessment.

The Principal said "we do assessment continuously, not exams."

Ms. Kuwa, the Grade 1 teacher, had not heard of continuous assessment. No other teachers said that they use CA.

Ms. Kuwa gives tests, has learners recite poems, and often assesses in groups.

Exams Circulars

Ms. Nangobe, the Principal, said that she had a copy of NIED 3/93, but did not know where it is. She added "for myself, I know everything and I tell [the teachers.]"

It became clear that the Principal not only does not know everything, but also does not share with her teachers what she thinks she knows in terms of assessment and promotion.

Syllabi and Schemes of Work

According to Ms. Nangobe, the school has old syllabi, but she was unable to show me any of them.

Ms. Kuwa, the Grade 1 teacher, found no syllabi at the school when she started teaching there. She went to different schools in the area, which also had no syllabi, and finally had to go to a school in another circuit to find syllabi to base her Scheme of Work on. She did not know what other teachers do about syllabi.

Mrs. Ileni in Grade 3 has never seen syllabi. She copies her Schemes of Work from old Schemes from 1989 or earlier. She does not know where these Schemes come from.

For whatever reasons, the school lacks both old and new syllabi. Schemes of Work are based on old Schemes or on textbooks.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence

Mrs. Ileni said that for the last 4 years, she and the other teachers in Grades 1 - 3 have been told by the Principal to change the marks on the Exams Schedules for learners who are "close" to the minimum needed to pass a subject. For instance, if a learner has 7 correct in handwriting, but needs 8 to pass, teachers are to change the mark to 8 automatically. This is done for individual subjects as well as total marks.

The Principal explained this to the teachers as something the circuit Inspector wanted them to do. Ms. Nangobe was being pressured by the Inspector to raise the numbers of learners passing. According to Mrs. Ileni, when the teachers complained that making these changes was not right, Ms. Nangobe said, "What do you want me to do? The Inspector wants this."

The Inspector said only that "I motivate them to get results."

Promotion Subjects for Grades 1 and 2
The MEC policy at the time was that promotion subjects were Medium of Instruction reading and oral; Maths; and handwriting.

Ms. Nangobe said the promotion subjects for Grade 1 are: Ndonga reading and writing; Maths; and handwriting. [The Principal was nearly right in her listing of promotion subjects for Grade 1, the only exception being that one of the subjects is Ndonga reading and oral, not reading and writing].

The Grade 1 teacher was far off the promotion subject for her Grade, particularly in the inclusion of English as one of the subjects. Ms. Kuwa listed the following as promotion subjects for Grade 1: Ndonga: reading, writing, oral; Maths; English oral. She said that Ndonga must be passed for a learner to be promoted. Ms. Nangobe was unaware that the promotion subjects for Grades 2 are the same as those for Grade 1. She said the promotion subjects for Grade 2 are: Ndonga reading and writing; Maths; handwriting; English oral; and Environment and Health.

Mrs. Fikameni made similar mistakes. She listed the following as promotion subjects in

Grade 2: Ndonga reading and writing; Maths; English reading; and Handwriting.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

The MEC policy at the time lists Medium of instruction oral, reading and writing; Other Language; Maths; and handwriting.

Ms. Nangobe was close to MEC policy when she said the promotion subjects for Grade 3 are: Ndonga reading and writing; Maths; handwriting; and English writing and oral.

Mrs. Ileni listed these promotion subjects for Grade 3: Maths; English; Ndonga; handwriting. She gave no details as to the components of each language to be included. The source of this information is the Exam Schedules, which list the above subjects as promotion subjects.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Ms. Kuwa was unable to answer the question what percentage a learner must have in order to pass. She said, looking at an assessment book, that learners must get 15 out of 50 to pass (which is 30%). Later, she said that a learner must have 40% to pass, but might be promoted (condoned) with 38 or 39%. She went on to say that if a learner fails Maths and passes Ndonga, she adds all marks together and decides whether the learner passes or fails, according to the overall percentage.

Based on the information in the teachers' Exam Schedules, there is no consistency in teachers' determination of passing and failing. In 1993, Ms. Kuwa included these subjects in the total, which was used to decide pass/fail: Ndonga (oral, reading, and writing); English (oral, reading and writing); Maths; and handwriting. To pass, learners had to have 40% total. In Term 1 of 1994, Ms. Kuwa included Ndonga and English (for both, oral and reading); Maths; Biblical Education; handwriting; and Environment. To pass, learners had to have 37% total.

Neither system is in keeping with Ministry policy at the time. According to NIED 42/93, which was in place during Term 1 of 1994, if a learner fails home language, he or she fails the term. Nine learners failed Ndonga and should have failed the term, but were marked as passing. Another stipulation of NIED 42/93 is that if learners fail two of the promotion subjects, in this case Maths and Handwriting, they fail the term or year. Fourteen additional learners in Ms. Kuwa's class failed both Maths and handwriting, and so should have failed the term.

Ms. Kuwa had recorded 67 out of 76 (88%) as passing, when actually the number should be only 44 passing (58%).

The Grade 2 teacher, Mrs. Fikameni, also used the total marks, not individual subjects, to decide passing or failing in Term 1 of 1994. Using this method, she had 37 out of 43 (84%) of the learners passing. Following NIED 42/93, two more learners should have failed term 1 because they failed Maths and handwriting.

In Mrs. Ileni's Grade 3 class in Term 1 of 1994, 42 out of 56 learners (75%) passed, using the total of marks from Ndonga, English, Maths, Bible, handwriting, and Environment. Using NIED 42/93's policies (and including English as a promotion subject), only 34 (61%) should have passed.

Between the Principal's encouragement of condonation, and the use of the total rather than individual subjects, many more learners are passing than should be doing so according to Ministry policy. In these three classes, 146 of 175 learners (83%) were passed, when only 113 (65%) should have passed.

Condonation

Ms. Nangobe, the Principal, said that learners may be condoned if they fail a Grade twice, as they may be failing because of the teacher's method, not through any fault of their own.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Justina Endjala, a parent, suggested that to reduce failure, parents advise children to learn hard, that parents help with school work, that teachers help learners after school and that children work hard.

Sesilia Paulus recommended that parents teach children at home so that when they start school they already know some things, and that teachers keep learners busy with a lot of classwork.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

On a number of levels, communication is quite bad in the school. Several teachers, one of them in Grade 2, are at odds with the Principal. Mrs. Fikameni said outright that the Principal was bad, that Ms. Nangobe refuses to listen to the School Committee and that she beats and insults learners. Other teachers seem to work well with the Principal.

Beyond the interpersonal problems, there are also professional ones. The Principal believes she knows the Ministry circulars well enough not to need to look at them or post them for teachers, and she believes that teachers have the same information she does, for instance, about promotion subjects. It is clear that each teacher has a different idea about determining promotion:

More worrying than the inaccuracies in the Principal's reading of the circulars, is her means of raising the pass rate at the school. Having teachers 'condone' all learners near the pass mark in several subjects is not an acceptable way to raise the pass rate.

Between School and Community/parents

There are problems of communication between the school and parents as well.

10. Recommendations

Easy to Fix

Revise Exams Schedules so that the correct promotion subjects are listed.

Make clear *how* promotion is determined on the Exam Schedule itself, not only in the Exams Circulars.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 2

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	50%	70%	67%
2	65%	83%	68%
3	83%	96%	94%

This school has high pass rates relative to other schools in Ondangwa with similar inputs. Before the arrival of new teachers in Grades 2 and 3 in 1994, the school had only one qualified teacher in lower primary. Class sizes ranged from 54 to 79 in 1992, and one-third of the buildings are traditional structures. The departure of the two unqualified teachers and the arrival of two qualified ones, gave the research team an opportunity to find out whether there was a difference in pass rates associated with qualification of teachers.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Kakonda	12	2	31
Grade 1A	Mrs. Hangapo	10	2	
Grade 1B	Mr. Ndapewa		2	
Grade 2	Mr. Amunyela		2	
Grade 3	Ms. Shekupe		2	

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is in Ohangwena in Ondangwa I, about 70 kilometers from Oshakati. For about 400 learners in Grades 1 to 5, there are 6 teachers. The medium of instruction is Kwanyama.

Several of the teachers at this school are new this year, including Mr. Ndapewa and Ms. Shekupe. Over the last year or two, unqualified teachers have been replaced by qualified teachers. Mr. Kakonda said that he expected the pass rate to improve with the qualified teachers' arrival, but several factors work against that improvement. First, the teachers with long tenure at the school, especially Mrs. Hangapo, tend to pass low numbers of learners, and seem to have great influence at the school. Mrs. Hangapo's point of view influences Mr. Ndapewa's classroom practice. Further, while Mr. Kakonda spoke in favor of passing learners, he also said several things suggesting that he mistrusts high pass rates.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

The Principal, Mr. Kakonda, seemed more interested in having his teachers be 'selective' and vigilant in examinations than in addressing the problems of those who fail or in increasing the numbers of learners passing. In Grades 1 - 3, many learners pass, but there are often great differences in the numbers of learners passing in the two classes within Grades. There is wide variation in the pass rates between Grade 1A and 1B, for instance (as discussed later).

The Principal was concerned not about the numbers who fail, but about those who pass. At the end of the year, many teachers just write down the symbols for learners, and do not show the exams to the Principal. Mr. Kakonda suspects the teachers do not mark the exams, but just put down symbols for learners.

Parents

Theresia Shilimela thinks that absenteeism is a cause of failure. Parents keep children out of school to fetch water and children decide not to go to school because they do not like it.

Cecilia Iitembu said that absenteeism, lack of time to study, and inattention in class contribute to failure. Some parents give children work to do after classes, even if children have tests the next day.

Learners

Leopold, who is in Grade 1 and thinks he is 3 years old (but is probably 7 or 8), failed Grade 1 because he could not read.

Martha, a learner in Grade 1, thinks she is 4 years old (but is clearly older). She said she failed Grade 1 because of handwriting and because she spent too much time grinding millet and sorghum, and not enough time doing school work.

Alfeus, who is 14 and in Grade 2, failed Grade 2 because of absenteeism.

Magdalena, who does not know her age, is in Grade 3. She said learners fail because they do not understand what is being taught.

Parents Whose Children Have Failed and Blame for Failure

Five out of six parents credit their children with failure. Even when there are other factors involved, such as work parents give learners to do during school time, learners are blamed for failure. Theresia Shilimela's son failed Grade 1. She did not ask him or his teacher why he failed. Theresia "felt pity" for him, but blamed her son for not paying attention in class. She said that she cannot help him because she is illiterate.

Cecilia Iitembu's daughter failed Grade 1. Cecilia was angry with her daughter because "I know she did not learn hard because it does not happen that a child fails when she has learned." Cecilia helped her daughter learn to read and write and her daughter passed Grade 1 the next year.

Rosalia Linus said that her daughter failed Grade 1 because she would rather play than learn. Rosalia was angry with her daughter but did not help her with her work.

Serapia Emmanuel, a parent, says that parents feel bad when learners fail, but have no way to do anything. Responsibility for failure depends on the situation. If a learner is always absent or weak in class, the home is responsible. If a teacher is not teaching what is needed, the teacher is responsible.

Serapia said it was possible that her young daughter may fail. She knows things but never volunteers, and the teacher complains. There is a 50/50 chance that she will fail Grade 1 this year. Teachers of the lower Grades expect oral participation, and can just choose the ones raising hands to pass. Serapia said she would not question the teacher's decision to fail her daughter, because the teacher has talked to Serapia already, and maybe her daughter will learn how to participate and ask questions if she spends another year in the grade.

Klaudia Tomas blames her son Andrew for failing. His father makes Andrew take the cattle to water and do other work, so that Andrew misses one or two days of school per week. Still, his mother thinks that Andrew's absences are not as big a factor in his failing as his not studying. She thinks maybe he does not work hard. When Andrew failed, his father said he would not pay school fees anymore and would take Andrew to the police to have him beaten. (When we tried to speak with Andrew just after school, he began to cry. He said his father would beat him if he were late getting home. We did not delay him further).

Martha, a Grade 1 learner, said her parents were very cross, and told her to learn hard, or else she would not get food to eat.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed

At this school failure is seen as a necessary part of the system. The absence or near absence of failure would be cause for suspicion. A 'healthy' failure rate is seen as the mark of a good teacher.

Mr. Kakonda, the Principal, looked at the results of Mrs. Hangapo's Grade 1A class in 1993. In that class, 23 out of 43 passed (53%). He said, somewhat admiringly, "She is selective." The number failing is acceptable, as "I am sure of what she did to come to passing marks." Other teachers "just push learners through." He added "If more than half the learners pass a teacher can say, 'I've done my duty.'"

He added that if many learners pass in a teacher's class each year, "I do not agree with that teacher," as the learners will have problems in the next Grade if they have been pushed through.

High overall pass rates (from 67 to 94% in Grades 1 - 3 in 1993) persist despite Mr. Kakonda's attitudes.

Mrs. Hangapo, when asked to compare her class pass rate with that of Mr. Ndapewa of Grade 1B, said that she had two thoughts. "If many learners pass, maybe I'm a good teacher, while the other teacher who has many fail is not. Or maybe the other teacher pushes learners through to the next Grade." When asked why a teacher would do that, she said that such teachers are lazy. They do not teach unless the Principal is watching. When exams come, that teacher wants learners to pass and so pushes them through.

Mr. Amunyela, the Grade 2 teacher, said that half or a third of a class failing would be too much, but one-fourth would be "normal."

Reasons for Variation

Those Who Pass Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mr. Kakonda considers "exam control," meaning the control of cheating among learners, to be the factor explaining the variation in pass rates in the school.

Mrs. Hangapo expects half of the 43 learners in her Grade 1 class to pass this year. That expectation is consistent with the number passing in term 1 (41%, or 23 of 56 learners). She expects the number of learners at the end of the year to be smaller than at the beginning, though she did not explain why.

In term 1, in Mr. Ndapewa's Grade 1B class, 78% (42 of 54 learners) passed, which is considerably higher than the number he gave us when pressed to guess how many will pass in December.

In Mr. Amunyela's Grade 2 class, 76% passed (70 out of 92 learners), and in Ms. Shekupe's Grade 3 class, 47% (28 out of 59) passed.

Whether it Is Possible for All the Learners in a Class to Pass

The staff of the school agree that it is not possible for all the learners in a class to pass. The Principal said that failure is not a good thing, and "I hope all the learners pass through." This statement is not consistent with his earlier comments.

Mr. Amunyela, the Grade 2 teacher, said it is impossible for all to pass. He based this view on the fact that he has never seen a whole class pass and that some learners are always weak. If all the learners in his class were to pass, some teachers might say he teaches well, while others would be suspicious and think he had given "false marks" to pass learners to the next class.

Mr. Ndapewa gave a similar answer, saying that if all of his Grade 1 class passed, other teachers would say he had just pushed them forward, that not all of them really passed.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Kakonda said of the parents that many live far away and most "don't know anything about school," but trust teaches for everything. A few parents come to school to see how their children are doing. Last year a parent who is "clever" (meaning that she can read), came to school to point out that the Grade 2 teacher had made a mistake in a test paper. The teacher corrected the mistake. It was clear in the telling of this story that the Principal was slightly annoyed by the incident, though it was unclear whether he was irritated with the parent or the teacher.]

Parents

Parents are tentative to come to school. There is no indication that they have been made to feel welcome, nor do they seem to feel like an integral part of the schooling process. Theresia Shilimela, a parent, does not visit the school. She does look at her children's books, but does not help them because they have never asked for help.

Cecilia Iitembu was called to school to discuss her child's absences, and attends the annual parents meeting. Rosalia Linus knows of a parent-teacher organization, but has never attended meetings.

Klaudia Tomas said that she would like to visit classes but would be afraid to ask. She has visited the school only to talk about her son's absences. Her husband did not go to school and does not think education is important.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

There is a kindergarten that meets in one of the traditional buildings formerly used for Grade 1 classes, but none of the teachers at the school knows what is taught in the kindergarten. Mrs. Hangapo said the children come from that kindergarten to her class.

In her opinion, school readiness means learners being 6 years old, so all the learners who come to 1A are school-ready. Mr. Kakonda explained that Grade 1A has learners under age 10, and 1B those over age 10. Mrs. Hangapo does not work with Mr. Ndapewa, because she has "small children," and he has "big children, who understand faster." The big learners understand faster because most of them are repeating Grade 1, having been in 1A the previous year.

When asked whether her class functions as a kind of kindergarten, with learners 'passing' on to Grade 1B, Mrs. Hangapo said that was not the case. It seems, however, that some kind of two-leveled system is working in Grade 1, with most learners repeating. In 1993, the former Grade 1B teacher passed 31 out of 37 learners 84%), while Mrs. Hangapo passed 23 of 43 (53%).

The pattern may well change this year, with Mr. Ndapewa, the new Grade 1 teacher, who is following Mrs. Hangapo's example in numbers of learners passing. He expects "maybe 30-something" out of 57 to pass. He said that would be a good number, because the others must remain. He did not explain why those learners had to stay in Grade 1.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Two learners take books home and three of them are helped at home by relatives. Two of the three learners who are now being helped with school work received no assistance before failing a Grade.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

Mr. Ndapewa gave the following lists when asked what learners must be able to do to pass Grade 1:

Maths: count from 1 - 50 out loud; write numbers from 1 - 15.

Kwanyama: a learner needs to be able to read a sentence such as "Mother is cooking" (in Kwanyama). In oral, he needs to be able to answer a question such as "Who is the head of this household?"

Mrs. Hangapo, the other Grade 1 teacher, said that in order to pass English oral, a learner must know greetings, members of the family, how to count from 1 to 20, and how to construct short sentences such as "Mother is cooking."

What Learners Are Taught in Each Grade

Mr. Ndapewa said that he and Mrs. Hangapo work together on Schemes of Work [their schemes were identical]. She, however, said that they do not work together because her class is far behind his class.

Teaching Methods

As in many other schools, the choral repetition method of teaching is used in this school. Teachers, especially in Grade 1, also have learners repeat individually. Grade 1, assessment observed was oral. In Mrs. Hangapo's English lesson, learners sang the lines of poetry after the teacher. No learners repeated the poem individually.

The Grade 3 teacher divided learners into groups and arranged a friendly competition between the two groups in Kwanyama oral. One group gave a proverb and the other had to explain it. The teacher assigned marks to the group doing the better job. Learners were attentive and seemed to know the proverbs well.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment
Standardisation of basic competencies

Training in Assessment

Mr. Ndapewa, who teaches 1B, said that he learned about continuous assessment at Ongwediva, but that things are different at the school. He sighed, saying, "Old teachers have control over new ones, and say what they learned at college does not belong here at school." A little concerned about what he had said, Mr. Ndapewa continued, "I may think that what I was taught was correct, but it is done differently at this school."

Mrs. Hangapo said that she has had no training in assessment, including during her 3 years at Ongwediva. She was told to set exams according to the age and understanding of learners.

Methods of Assessment

At this school teachers use both exams and CA. It was not clear whether symbols come from some combination of CA and exams, nor was it clear whether exams are oral or written or both.

Mr. Kakonda, the Principal, said that from 1992, his school started doing continuous assessment, which he defined as "assessment a teacher makes when he is teaching." A teacher makes notes of the knowledge of children and keeps marks for each learner every time he does something. The teacher collects these test marks and uses them, along with exams, in deciding promotion.

Mr. Ndapewa, who teaches the Grade 1B class, said that it is difficult to do continuous assessment in the school because he must ask every learner questions and he has 61 learners. When we visited the school in the middle of term 2, he did not yet have any marks for continuous assessment. Mr. Ndapewa said he would do one continuous assessment in July and one in August. He did not explain how the assessment would be done.

Mrs. Hangapo does not call her assessment continuous, but she does not do exams only (for example, she has 3 marks for each subject for Term 1). In Kwanyama oral, learners recite poems; in reading, learners must point out a syllable on the board -- such as "ya." Mrs. Hangapo did not have any marks for Term 2, and all three of the marks for Term 1 in one subject were given in the space of two weeks. She explained that she had not "taught enough" to give tests earlier in term 1, nor by that point in Term 2.

Mr. Amunyela, the Grade 2 teacher, had not heard of continuous assessment.

Mrs. Hangapo said that she used to get symbols for Kwanyama reading by having learners read words directly from their reading book, but stopped when she realized the learners were memorizing the words. She then added new words she uses to test the learners in reading.

Mr. Amunyela, the Grade 2 teacher, said that symbols come from tests only. He also said that he would give tests in July and August.

Ms. Shekupe said that symbols come from exams and tests and from answering questions in class. She did not elaborate on the classroom assessment.

Exams Circulars

The Principal had several exams circulars, the most recent one being 42/93.

Syllabi and Schemes of Work

The Principal told us more than once that teachers had the syllabi; teachers said the Principal had them. We did not see the syllabi in the three days we were at the school, except for a 1986 DNE syllabus for *Our Own Reader*. Perhaps the school has lost these syllabi or never received them.

Schemes of Work are based on old Schemes. Mr. Amunyela, the new Grade 2 teacher, was in the process of copying the Scheme of the previous teacher into a book, and changing it from a four to a three-term plan.

Learner Exercise Books

The levels of the work done in Grades 1A and 1B do not differ by much. The learners' Maths books for both classes are similar in the number learners got correct, and learners were given similar problems to do (such as 8 + 4, 11 - 2).

Learners in Grade 2 do problems somewhat more complicated than those done in Grade 1. In Maths, for instance, they do subtraction vertically (47 - 22).

In Grade 3, the work seems much the same: problems such as 31 - 5 and 51 - 4. [Note: the teacher would not give us learners' books to look at. These notes are based on the teacher's test book.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction reading and oral; Maths; and handwriting.

All three people interviewed had different ideas about what the promotion subjects are. Mr. Kakonda correctly listed the promotion subjects as Maths, Kwanyama and handwriting. The Grade 1 and 2 teachers, however, incorrectly listed the promotion subjects. Mr. Kakonda said that he staff discussed the promotion subjects at the beginning of the year. He is quite sure that his teachers know the promotion subjects.

Despite using the same Scheme of Work and cooperating in various ways, the Grade 1 teachers do not have the same sense of what the promotion subjects are. Mr. Ndapewa listed the promotion subjects as: Kwanyama reading and "counting." He said that English is not a promotion subject, and that handwriting "can be" a promotion subject. If a learner fails reading, he cannot pass "because it's the law."

Mrs. Hangapo listed the promotion subjects in Grade 2 as Kwanyama reading (which must be passed) and oral; Maths (which can be failed and not stop a learner from passing); handwriting; and English oral.

Mr. Amunyela said that the promotion subjects are Kwanyama reading and oral; Maths; and English oral and reading.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3
MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction (oral, reading and writing); English oral and reading; Maths; and handwriting.

Mr. Kakonda correctly listed the promotion subjects as English, Kwanyama, Maths, and handwriting.

Mrs. Shekupe, like Mr. Kakonda, said that the promotion subjects are Kwanyama, English, Maths, and handwriting. If a learner fails Kwanyama and passes all other subjects, he can be promoted. This statement is incorrect.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mrs. Hangapo, in illustrating for us how she gets a percentage from an assessment, gave the example of a learner getting 25/40 correct. She went up to the board, did 25/40 in long division, and got 50% (the correct percentage is 63).

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Relations among staff members are cordial, though the Principal clearly mistrusts the teaching methods and evaluation procedures of some teachers. There is a number of gaps in communication -- for instance regarding promotion subjects, and the Principal has a difficult time remedying the problems. He said to us that he was unable to be "fully" the Principal, because he has to teach Grade 4 all day long.

There is a lack of trust between the Principal and teachers (with the Principal saying that some teachers do not mark exams and do not supervise learners during exams), and between teachers and learners (with teachers saying that learners cheat often).

Teachers do not seem to cooperate, though there is no lack of friendliness. They simply do not discuss school matters very much. We did not get a sense of a community of learners and teachers, as teachers did not call learners by name. Consistent with the possibility that teachers do not know the names of learners, there were often 20 or more learners absent from classes, while fewer absences were recorded in record books.

Between School and Community/parents

The school does not involve parents. More than one parent said she had never been invited to the school, and a couple of parents were unaware of a School Committee. Parents do not receive reports and do not visit the school often. Communication with parents is not good, whether because of parents' disinterest or school lack of effort or both. One example is the fact that the school has stopped sending out reports to the parents, for lack of forms. It would not be too difficult in a school that does not seem short of stationery, to make up a form.

Between School and Regional Office

When the research team asked whether we might observe classes and apologized for taking up so much of his time, Mr. Kakonda said "We can stay here up to the night to talk," and went on to explain that the school is rarely visited. Mr. Kakonda said that he sees the Inspector infrequently. The Inspector passes by when he needs something or to bring an urgent message. He stops briefly, takes registers, and leaves. He never has visited classes, and there have been no inspections here. Mr. Kakonda added that "bulletins are our inspections." Further, "We read through bulletins together, but not all of us understand bulletins." Mr. Kakonda thanked us for visiting, and asked us to let him see a copy of the report when it is finished.

Clearly, this school, along with many others, suffers from lack of assistance from the regional office.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Clarify with school staff what the promotion subjects are.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 3

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	38%	48%	51%
2	47%	52%	53%
3	56%	58%	53%

With qualified teachers in both Grades 2 and 3, class sizes of 49 to 75, less than one-quarter of its buildings being traditional structures, this school was expected to have a higher pass rate.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Ms. Hango	11	2	13
Grade 1A	Mrs. Ashuulu	11	none	5
Grade 2	Mrs. Ethingo	11	2	8
Grade 3	Mrs. Iikuyu	9	2	7

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is less than 100 kilometers from Oshakati, in Ohangwena in Ondangwa I. There are 8 teachers for about 400 learners in Grades 1 to 6. The medium of instruction is Kwanyama.

When we arrived at the school, all learners and teachers were in classrooms. The Principal had received a handwritten note from the Inspector, telling her of our visit. She seemed careful, but not mistrustful of us. Although we emphasised that this study was not an evaluation of the school, but of the way the school assesses learners, the two Grade 1 teachers sat with arms crossed, looking away from us and out the window. When these teachers were asked to bring us learner test or exercise books, they said that they did not have any. The teachers said that learners just write in the sand. The Principal was surprised by this and managed to persuade the teachers to bring us these books, which they did have.

There was a parents' meeting on the second day we were at the school. Learners stayed home and parents came for about 4 hours. At least 80 parents attended, about three-quarters of them women. The Principal, Ms. Hango, opened the meeting, saying that we were there from the Ministry to answer parents' questions. We quickly cleared up the misunderstanding, saying that we were there to observe. Despite our statements, several times the parents and teachers tried to get us to respond to questions about why the Ministry is not taking care of kindergartens anymore.

Topics of discussion included: latecoming of learners; parents not feeding learners before school; and parents' criticism of teachers. The Grade 3 teacher, Mrs. Iikuyu, asked parents what she should do if only 2 out of 90 learners come on time. Should she teach them or send them home? Parents said she should teach the learners. Mrs. Iikuyu replied "the only ones coming early don't know anything and are a waste of time!" Parents seemed to agree or at least not to disagree. At the end of the meeting, Ms. Hango said that from that day on, school would start on time and teachers would not wait for learners.

Teachers complained that parents do not feed learners at home, and that while parents say teachers are "delaying" learners with education, parents are not providing for their children. As a consequence, learners sleep in class. Parents were upset, saying that there is not enough food. None of the parents looked underfed. Finally, Ms. Hango said that parents say teachers do not teach. She told parents that they must stop telling children that certain teachers are bad.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

The Principal and teachers gave various explanations of failure and of the changes in pass rates, but none of them is convincing, given the evidence.

Ms. Hango, the Principal, said that so many learners failed in Grades 1 - 3 in 1993 (from 47 to 49%), because of overcrowded classes. She said that in the first term of 1994, the pass rates were better because there were fewer learners in classes (failure rates were 27 to 42%). However, her statements are inaccurate, as the following table illustrates:

	1993				1994			
GRADE	PASS	FAIL	TOTAL LEARNERS	% PASS	PASS	FAIL	TOTAL LEARNERS	% PASS
1	56	54	110	51	50	37	87	57
2	34	30	64	53	57	29	86	66
3	29	26	55	53	49	18	67	73

In Grade 1 in 1994 there are fewer learners than there were in 1993, but in Grade 2 there were 64 learners in 1993 and 86 in 1994, and in Grade 3 there were 55 learners in 1993, with 67 in 1994. The pass rates do not go up as the number of learners per class goes down.

The research team pointed this fact out to Ms. Hango, and asked what else contributes to failure. She said "I don't know really." Later, she said that absenteeism is a factor.

Ms. Hango agreed that the best teachers would have the fewest learners failing "because some teachers are gifted and the child can 'see' the teacher talking about something and remember it when taking a test." When I pointed out that the Grade 2 teacher, whom Ms. Hango says is the best, does not have a lower failure rate than the other teachers, Ms. Hango was quiet.

Mrs. Ashuulu, who teaches Grade 1, believes learners fail because they do not come to school and because she lacks teaching aids. When asked whether all of those who fail are those who miss school, she answered that some of those who fail do not miss school. Rather, "their heads are not open," meaning the learners do not know [illegible]. She said she keeps these learners for five minutes after class, "but they still can't understand."

Mrs. Iikuyu, the Grade 3 teacher, said that the pass rate in 1993 (57%, or 32 of 56 passing) was acceptable "because the majority passed."

Parents

Lucia Romanus believes that children fail because they don't learn hard, they are absent, and because parents give them work to do at home, such as looking after cattle. Parents say that if a child does not work, "he or she should eat classes."

Learners

Learners focus on which subjects they failed to explain failure. Mateus, a learner in Grade 1, said he failed Grade 1 last year because he did not attend school regularly. He said, "Sometimes I just don't feel like coming to school and remain home for no reason." His parents say nothing to him about missing school.

Jason, who is in Grade 1 again, failed Grade 1 at another school. There he failed Maths, English, and Kwanyama. He failed because he did badly on his exams.

Maria said she failed Grade 1 because she failed Maths. Asked to do the following problems, she said: 1 + 3 - 4 and 2 - 3 = 3. Other learners fail because they fail Bible exams.

Kornelius, who is in Grade 2, said that learners fail because of Biblical study.

Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

The Principal and teachers are not troubled by their own childrens' failure. There seems to be no stigma attached to failure in this school. One teacher even kept her own children in a Grade for two years although they had passed the first time.

Ms. Hango's child failed Grade 5 last year. She has no idea why the child failed, guessing "maybe she was too young." Ms. Hango did not ask the teacher why her daughter failed, saying "it was not needed." It is interesting to compare Ms. Hango's own lack of interest in the causes of her child's failure with her attitude toward other parents' reactions to failure.

Mrs. Ashuulu's child failed Grade 1 at another school. Mrs. Ashuulu does not know why it happened, saying "maybe she was too young, and didn't know what school is."

Mrs. Iikuyu, the Grade 3 teacher, decided to keep her own two children in Grade 2 to repeat, even though both had passed the year. She decided they should stay there for two years each to know their work better. When asked how they felt about this, she said "they can't say anything." When she showed them their books and explained that they had not failed, they accepted her decision.

Parents Whose Children Have Failed and Placing Blame for Failure

The fault for failure is seen to be the learner's. Parents and learners blame children for not working hard and often learners are punished at home for failure. Other learners may or may not laugh at those who fail. As Kornelius, a Grade 2 learner, said, other learners do not laugh at or blame those learners who fail "because tomorrow might be your turn to fail."

Learners

Mateus, who failed Grade 1 last year, was punished by his parents, who did not feed him for a day. Then they "told me to learn hard."

Jason, a learner in Grade 1, blamed himself for failing because he did not write exams well. He said "the teacher did not make me fail purposely, only because I didn't learn." His parents were annoyed, "and didn't want me to come into the house because I didn't learn hard. They told me it was better for me to stay at the house [than to go to school] because I am wasting peoples' education."

Maria, who is in Grade 2 now, failed Grade 1. Her mother told her to keep her report and only to give it to her when Maria had passed. Maria's mother has started asking to see her books after school and has helps her with reading and Maths.

Reasons for Variation and Those Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

In Mrs. Ashuulu's Grade 1A class, 27 out of 58 (47%) passed term 1 this year.

Asked if all the learners in the two Grade 1 classes (a total of 110 in 1993 and 87 in 1994) were to pass, what the single Grade 2 teacher would do with all the learners, the Principal said that she had asked for another teacher, but was refused. She added that "whenever a child passes, we just have to send him to the next Grade." It seems that the lack of space in Grade 2 is not an explicit concern of the Principal, though it still might be operating to constrain the numbers of learners passing to Grade 2.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

The Principal and teachers agree that not all the learners in a class can pass to the next Grade. They base this conclusion on a comparison of learners' abilities relative to one another, not on the achievement of basic competencies.

Ms. Hango, the Principal, believes it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because "children are not the same in knowledge." She continued, "If you make a test, it is impossible all learners will pass unless the test wasn't well-prepared."

Mrs. Ashuulu said that it is not possible for all the learners in a class to pass, because of attendance. When asked whether all the learners might pass if there were only 30 learners in a class, and they attended regularly, she said it would be possible, because all learners could ask questions in class. If her whole class passed, she would expect the other teachers, the principal and parents to be happy. They would think she was a good teacher, and ask her how she managed to have the whole class pass.

Mrs. Iikuyu said that she would have to see whether all her learners could pass this year. When asked whether it is possible in any class in general, she said it is impossible. "In a classroom situation, not all learners are the same. Those who don't cope easily need another year."

3. Parent Characteristics

At the parents meeting, a school board member carried around a list for parents to sign their names. Some parents laughed, unable to sign their names. Ms. Hango said that parents did not receive school reports on their children's progress because most parents are illiterate. A moment later, however, she said that she had invited parents to the meeting by letter, and said "many parents can read."

According to the Principal, most parents are farmers. Ms. Hango, when asked how parents react to childrens' failure, replied, "Parents in the bush have the traditional manner; they don't know the importance of school."

Parental Involvement in School

Ms. Hango said that if learners are absent a lot, some parents encourage them to come. Others do not. The school, she said, does "nothing" if learners are absent.

Parents

Scolastica Nakale said that that day was her first time to visit the school. She was called to a parents meeting. Prior to that day, she had not been told that it was allowed for parents to visit classes.

Scolastica said that her children in Grade 1 "only know how to read the alphabet and I try to teach them how to read sentences." Scolastica said that the school is good because she sees progress in her childrens' work.

After the parents' meeting, few parents were willing to stay to be interviewed, and we were able to interview only two parents at this school.

Learners

Maria, who is in Grade 2, said her mother comes to parents' meetings, but does not come to school or classes otherwise.

Kornelius, who is in Grade 2, said his parents have come five times to school to check on his reports and see if he is progressing. Kornelius said he is doing well.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

No staff members commented on learners being unready for school.

Whether Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Veronika, who is in Grade 1B, takes her books home. Her parents do not ask to see her books, but she shows her parents her work anyway. Sometimes her mother helps Veronika read.

Jason, who is in Grade 1, sometimes takes his books home and reads with his brother, who is in Grade 2. His mother also reads to him.

Kornelius does not take books home because the Grade 2 teacher says learners will lose them.

Quality of Teaching and School

Learners said they were satisfied with their teachers, usually because the teachers do not beat them, or beat them infrequently. Benyamen, who said he is 3 years old (but is at least 6 or 7), and is in Grade 1, said his teacher is not good because she always shouts at him and says he is naughty and does not know anything. Mateus, who is in Grade 1, thinks his teacher is good because "even if you are late, she doesn't do anything to you," and she teaches well by making learners repeat words several times after her.

Jason, a Grade 1 learner, likes school "because I am learning good things." His teacher is good because "she doesn't beat me too much." She beats him and the class only when they fail to learn a lesson.

Kornelius said that the Grade 2 teacher is good "because I have never seen her beating a learner."

Attendance

Learners

Attendance varies, and based on assessment and attendance records, there is no clear relationship between passing and attendance. In Grade 3 in Term 1, one learner, who was present only 3 days of 32 in term 1, and who missed all of the Kwanyama tests in term 1, still passed term 1.

Benyamen, a Grade 1 learner, comes regularly. Mateus, who is in Grade 1 also, stays away for no reason. When Veronika, a Grade 1 learner, does not want to go to school, "my mother drives me, saying 'I want you to learn like other children.'"

Jason did not miss school much at his previous school but still failed Grade 1 there. Maria attends school regularly because her mother said she would beat her if she were absent for no reason. Kornelius, who is in Grade 2, said that he goes to school unless he is sick.

Parents

Scolastica Nakale said that parents think their children are at school, but may hear later that the children miss much school. When this happens, she warns her children that if they do not want to go to school she will not pay their school fees.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Textbooks

Ms. Hango complained that there are too few books for the learners in Grades 1 - 3. They may have 50 books and 90 learners, so they do not use the books. She did not like the suggestion that learners could share books.

Basic Competencies

Ms. Hango, the Principal, listed the following basic competencies for each grade:

Grade 1: in Kwanyama, learners must know the letters of the alphabet, words like "meme" and "tate" and their own names. They do not have to know sentences.

Grade 2: learners must "read clearly" to pass. She was not able to say any more specifically what they should read, except to say that they must read from their reading book.

Learners

Veronika, a learner in Grade 1, who is expected by the teacher to fail, could not read the letter "e" (she read it as "t") and was unable to write the letter "a" (she wrote "o").

Mateus, a learner who is repeating in Grade 1 and who is expected by the teacher to pass, was unable to read "kwa" from his Maths book.

Teaching Methods

Classroom observation: Grade 1 Kwanyama lesson

The classroom is a traditional structure with large gaps between the sticks and zinc roof. Learners keep moving to avoid the sunny spots. The room is stiflingly hot.

The teacher, Mrs. Ashuulu, gives each learner a small card with a syllable on it. One girl is called to the front to read her word, "ni," and other learners repeat after her. The other learners are not able to see the words, which are on cards the size of business cards. A second learner could not read "ku." The teacher reads it and makes the learner repeat. None of the other learners sees or repeats the word. Nothing is written on the board.

During the lesson, several learners play at the back. One boy beats a girl who is much smaller than he is. The teacher says nothing. The learners sing a song. The lesson is over.

Classroom observation: Grade 3 Maths lesson

Mrs. Iikuyu draws circles with three and five triangles inside them. She uses 3 < 5 to show that 3 is less than 5. Then the teacher asks one learner whether 3 is an even number. He and another learner both does not know the answer, so they are made to stand for the rest of the lesson as punishment. Mrs. Iikuyu explains that 3 is not an even number because there is one element left without a partner.

The next learner is told to draw five elements in a circle. He draws four triangles and writes the mirror image of 5 on the board. Mrs. Iikuyu shows him how to write 5 correctly, but does not correct the number of elements in the circle.

Classroom observation: Grade 3: English lesson in counting

Half the learners have the Mathematika workbooks and fewer than half have pencils or pens. The teacher teaches mostly in Kwanyama, with a few English words. She tells the learners to come to the board to write the numerals for the numbers she reads: four, five, etc. The teacher calls up the same learner twice, and he writes the numerals correctly. The learners at their desks look uncomprehending, and do not write anything. They look at the teacher, who seems not to realize that they do not understand what she is doing. The teacher tells the learners to fill in the numerals in their books. Example: seven ______. The learners, for the most part, write nothing. It is clear that they do not know how to read these words in English. The teacher waits five minutes, not checking on anyone's work, then tells learners to finish at home.

Next, using *Go For English* book 1, the teacher does a nursery rhyme: "one, two, do up my shoe; three, four, knock at the door; five, six, pick up sticks; seven, eight, lay them straight; nine, ten, a big fat hen." The teacher says the rhyme and learners watch her. Then she has them repeat line by line. The learners mimic the teacher, doing the actions in the rhyme. When they bend to "do up" their shoes, most move their hands above bare feet. The learners' books are open to pictures of the nursery rhyme. Learners are not required to read anything. The teacher goes through some of the words, asking what they mean: hen, fat, stick. The teacher says that she does not have a stick to show them, but picks up a bit of straw, and says a stick is like straw. The teacher tells the research team that the lesson is over, and seems eager for us to leave.

Evaluation Books and Methods of Assessment

Grade 1: for Term 1, the teacher had one symbol each for Kwanyama oral and writing (no symbol for reading); one each for English oral and reading; and one for Bible, Environment, Maths and handwriting. 23 of 42 learners failed English oral; 9 failed Kwanyama oral, and 9 failed Kwanyama writing.

Learner books for Grade 1: although the handwriting for the two learners whose books we had, was almost perfect, the teacher had failed them both in handwriting the first term.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment
Standardisation of basic competencies

Training in Assessment and Methods of assessment

Mrs. Ashuulu, the Grade 1A teacher, who attended a teacher training college but did not finish the degree, said she has had no training in assessment. The only guide she has to assessment is the Ministry circular. Mrs. Ashuulu, asked what the order of importance is between progress in class and exams, said that if a learner does not do well in class, it is clear that the learner will fail. She was unable to explain what she meant. Mrs. Ashuulu said that all Grade 1 marks and symbols come from tests.

Ms. Hango checks teachers' exams to be sure they are not too difficult or easy. Her sense of level of difficulty she learned at Ongwediva from 1977 to 1978.

Mrs. Iikuyu, the Grade 3 teacher, said that all symbols come from exams given at the end of the term.

Exams Circulars

In the staff room, the Principal showed us a copy of an Exams circular from 1991, with Pass Requirements. The school has nothing more recent than this document and policies on promotion have changed since 1991.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
Policy at the time: Medium of Instruction, oral and reading; Maths; and handwriting.

The Principal and teachers have different ideas about the promotion subjects and the Principal is closer to MEC policy. Ms. Hango said the promotion subjects for Grades 1 and 2 are: Kwanyama reading; Maths; and handwriting. According to Ms. Hango, earners must pass Kwanyama reading in both Grades in order to pass.

Mrs. Ashuulu said the promotion subjects for Grade 1 are: Kwanyama oral, reading, and writing; Maths; handwriting; and English oral and reading. She said that this information comes from the Ministry.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3
Policy at the time: Medium of Instruction (oral, reading and writing); Maths; handwriting; and English (oral and reading).

Ms. Hango listed the promotion subjects for Grade 3 as: Kwanyama and English oral, reading and writing; and Maths. When asked what must be passed in order for a learner to be promoted, Ms. Hango said "it is not good to talk about someone else's task," and suggested we ask the Grade 3 teacher.

Mrs. Iikuyu said the promotion subjects in Grade 3 are: Kwanyama reading and writing; English oral, reading and writing; Maths; and handwriting. She added that if a learner passes two of the promotion subjects and another subject, the learner passes. Mrs. Iikuyu, like her colleagues, does not know the meaning of "promotion subjects."

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Grade 1

One of the Grade 1 teachers had symbols for Rukwangali (oral, reading and writing, but no total); English (oral and reading); Maths; and handwriting. The following is an excerpt taken from the 1993 year-end Exams Schedule (the "a's" are for absences):

LEARNER	KWANYAMA			ENGLISH		MATH	HANDWRITING	P/F
Maria	oral	reading	writing	oral	reading			
Albert	C	FF	F	FF	FF	F	F	P
Josef	E	a	FF	E	a	a	E	P
Henok	F	a	FF	FF	a	a	a	F
Naftal	E	a	a	F	F	FF	E	P

In 1993, 27 out of 58 (47%) learners passed. This teacher passed some learners who failed all the promotion subjects, and learners who were absent for assessments. There is no pattern in her promotion decisions.

Mrs. Ashuulu said that she decides pass/fail by adding Kwanyama and English. When asked to explain, she said a learner can fail Kwanyama oral and reading, but if Mrs. Ashuulu knows the learner did well in other terms, she condones the learner. A learner can have FF in Kwanyama and still be promoted.

Mrs. Ashuulu went on to say that she counts marks and if they are as high as 34, the learner passes. When asked which subjects she looks at, Mrs. Ashuulu said all of them. She said the book in which she keeps those marks is at home. Asked if all subjects are equally important in deciding promotion, she said the promotion subjects are Kwanyama reading and Maths. If a learner fails these two subjects, he cannot be promoted.

At this point, several things were clear: Mrs. Ashuulu is confused about what the promotion subjects are and what it means to be a promotion subject; she thinks that 34 is passing, instead of 40% (though she never made it clear that she meant 34 *percent*); and her exams or tests are not used as measures of learner competencies in determining pass/fail. We went on to ask about how she determines percentages.

We asked how she gets symbols, and there was no reply. Asked what symbol a learner would get if he had 10 correct on a 20-mark test, Mrs. Ashuulu said she needed paper to show us. We offered her paper, but she got up and left the classroom. After ten minutes had passed, one of the research assistants went to bring Mrs. Ashuulu back, as it was clear that she did not know how to get a percentage. The research assistant found Mrs. Ashuulu in the staffroom, with four other teachers, crowded around a piece of paper, trying to work out the percentage.

Mrs. Ashuulu tried to explain that she does not concentrate on percentages, but on symbols. She could not explain how she arrives at symbols.

As the research team was leaving, Mrs. Ashuulu asked whether she would lose her job because of our study. We made it clear that she was not being evaluated, but that we wanted to know what methods the teachers used to determine pass/fail, so that assessment could be improved in the schools.

Grade 3

In 1993, 32 out of 58 (55%) of the learners passed. The Grade 3 teacher had the following symbols and pass/fail determinations (there were no subdivisions into oral, reading and writing components under the languages):

LEARNER	KWANYAMA	ENGLISH	MATHS	HANDWRITING	P/F
Tresis	D	C	E	B	F
Adleheid	FF	F	C	A	P
Levi	FF	B	C	D	P
Ludwina	FF	E	C	---	F

It is hard to understand how Tresis, who got D, C, E and B in the promotion subjects, was failed. Unfortunately, we were unable to discuss these marks at length with the Grade 3 teacher because she stood up during the interview, and announced she was going home.

Condonation

Ms. Hango said that condonation is uncommon at the school.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Mrs. Iikuyu suggested extra lessons for those who have failed would help reduce the numbers of learners failing.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

The Principal, Ms. Hango, seems less than aware of what is going on in the school. She does not know when the school was built, nor any of its history, saying that those things happened before she arrived. She said that she did not know whether learner attendance was a problem "because I am not a class teacher."

Mrs. Iikuyu, the Grade 3 teacher, said that she does not work with other teachers in Grades 2 or 4 to discuss what learners should know in each Grade to be promoted. She has been told by the Grade 4 teacher that some learners are not ready for Grade 4. Mrs. Iikuyu's reply is that "there is nothing I can do since they have left the grade already."

Between School and Community/parents

The school does not make an effort to involve parents. Rather, the Principal and teachers seem to call on the parents only for school funds and to help solve school problems (such as latecoming). Parents seem used to not being included, and do not seem to respond to calls such as the one to feed children before school.

Between School and Regional Office

Ms. Hango said we were the first visitors this year. The Inspector "does not come," and she does not have any idea when he will.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Get a copy of the most recent Exams Circular to the school and have the Inspector or a Subject Advisor teach the staff how to determine pass/fail.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 4

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	51%	55%	100%
2	65%	62%	81%
3	69%	64%	83%

This school was selected for the large changes in pass rates from one year to the next in the same Grade.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Andreas			16 (?)
Grade 1A	Ms. Lamek	12	2	11
Grade 1B	Ms. Nehale	12	1 or 2	7
Grade 2A	Mr. Joseph	11	1 or 2	7
Grade 2B	Ms. Shiimi	10 or 11	none	5

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is fewer than 20 kilometer from Oshakati, in Oshana in Ondangwa II. There are 18 teachers for over 600 learners in Grades 1 to 9.

The Inspector told us that Mr. Andreas was one of the weakest Principals in the circuit as he is aggressive, easily annoyed by advice, and is a poor manager. Further, according to the Inspector, the school staff reject Mr. Andreas and do not consult him in what they do. Mr. Andreas cannot control his school.

We met Mr. Andreas at the circuit office. He seemed not excited at our visit, but not hostile either. Apparently, the circuit Inspector had announced that we would be visiting the school, but Mr. Andreas was not at the meeting, so neither he nor his staff were expecting our visit.

When we arrived, at least half the classes were unattended. Five teachers were in the staff room. The noise level was high. Several teachers walked past us and did not greet us.

After talking with the senior teacher, the research team waited for the teachers of Grades 1 - 3 to arrive. About 15 minutes later, they walked in. There was a mood of sullen non-cooperation on the part of these teachers. It was just past 10 in the morning, but teachers told us lessons were finished for the day for Grades 1 - 3.

The Principal, Mr. Andreas, did not want to talk with us when we asked him to, but waited an hour or so. He pulled his chair far from us, perhaps because he smelled of alcohol. His hair was unkempt and he looked rumpled. The research team was not able to arrange to interview the Grade 3 teachers.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

Mr. Andreas did not specifically address the questions set him. He did say that he has problems with teachers, both qualified and unqualified. One Grade 2 teacher is bad and his learners do not do well. Mr. Andreas also said that in order to get more learners to pass, teachers have to be good and want all the learners to pass.

Another factor in failure is absenteeism. Mr. Andreas said that parents keep learners at home during harvest. Other times of the year, learners choose not to come to school.

Parents

Petrina Jacobus said that at a parent-teacher meeting, parents said that learners fail because teachers are not qualified and because some learners do not learn hard. At that meeting, the Principal agreed.

Learners

As at many other schools, learners take responsibility for failure. Wilhelm, who is 10 years old and in Grade 2, said that learners fail because they cannot read and write Ndonga and English.

Monika said she failed Grade 1 last year because she could not read and write. Isak, who is in Grade 3 now, failed in Grade 1 because of Maths and in Grade 2 because he could not write Ndonga and English.

Petrus, a Grade 2 learner, does not remember what subjects he failed in Grade 1, but said that he failed because he didn't learn hard. Fiina, who is 8 years old and in Grade 3, has not failed. She said that learners fail because they don't learn hard and because they do not know anything.

Placing Blame for Failure

At this school, both learners and teachers are held accountable for failure. Mr. Joseph, a Grade 2 teacher, said that it is the fault of the teacher that learners fail. A moment later, he went on to say that parents say teachers do not teach well, but that that is not true. He said that teachers expect everyone to pass, but some children do not know anything. In the end, as with many things Mr. Joseph said, it is hard to know what he meant.

Parents

Sabina Kandowa, whose child failed in Grade 4 last year, said that parents blame teachers for not teaching well, when learners fail. If a child has to spend two years in one Grade, the teacher must not be teaching well.

Helen Shikongo, whose child has never failed, said that some parents blame learners and others blame teachers, but all the parents do nothing -- they just stay quiet.

Thomas Shipanga said that both teachers and learners are responsible for failure. Some learners do not pay attention. If only 5 out of 50 learners (10%) pass in a year, the fault is the teacher's.

Learners

Isak, who is in Grade 3, said that when he failed in Grades 1 and 2, his parents blamed him and refused to buy him clothes as punishment. Since he failed, his father has been helping him with Maths and checks his work at school.

Isak added that he expects to pass Grade 3 and if he should fail, he would be angry with the teacher, because it would be her fault. She would be at fault, he said, because he is ready to go on to Grade 4.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/should Be Changed and Those Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Ms. Lamek expects 46 of 62 learners (74%) to pass this year. She said it is not a good number. 52 (84%) would be better. She added that she expects all the learners to pass, but that is not possible.

Mr. Andreas said that 40 out of 62 (65%) would be a good number to pass in Grade 1. He added that "we did nothing" to help those learners who are failing.

In his Grade 2 class, Mr. Joseph expects 25 out of 31 learners (81%) to pass. In Term 1, 19 learners passed (61%). Mr. Joseph thinks 25 would be a good number to have passing.

Parents

Thomas Shipanga said that he thinks 26 or 27 out of a class of 50 learners should pass (52 - 54%). By implication, then, he is satisfied with the pass rates at the school.

Reasons for Variation

Parents

Thomas Shipanga was unaware of how many learners pass and fail in Grades 1 and 2.

Helen Shikongo, who has a child in Grade 3 who has never failed , said that she thinks that if half the learners fail, that is not good.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Teachers were uninformed about what was happening at their school. Mr. Andreas said it is possible for all the learner in a class to pass, but it usually does not happen. Some children "are without knowing nothing," particularly writing, when they come to school, so it is hard for them to pass.

Ms. Lamek said that it might be possible for all the learners to pass in other Grades, but not in Grade 1. She based this opinion on experience teaching, and on her view that some learners do not know why they are in class, and cannot read. [She was unaware that all of her class had passed in 1993].

Mr. Joseph, who teaches a Grade 2 class, said it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass, as some cannot read. He did not know all the learners in Grade 2 in 1994 had passed Grade 1 in 1993.

Parents

Thomas Shipanga, who has children in Grades 1 and 2, said that it is not possible for all learners to pass, as they have different talents.

Helen Shikongo did not know whether it would be possible for all the learners in a class to pass. She said she only knows that some learners always fail.

Petrina Jacobus, Grandmother of children in Grades 1, 2 and 3, said that it is possible that all the learners in a class might pass. It has happened at this school, in the lower Grades, more than once. When all the learners pass, "it is God who gives knowledge to the teacher." This parent was better-informed about the pass rate than were the teachers.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Perceptions of the parents' involvement differ. Ms. Lamek, a Grade 1 teacher, said that parents do not come to watch classes, and that few parents come to meetings at the school. She concluded that parents have little interest in school.

All four parents interviewed come for parents meetings. Only one comes on her own to visit.

Fiina, who is in Grade 3, said that her parents are always happy when she passes. They do not visit the school except for parents meetings.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

Mr. Andreas said that in the past, parents disagreed with the pass/fail decision because teachers favored the children of relatives and friends. Now, parents understand that learners pass because they study.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Underage learners do not seem to be a problem at the school. The research team did not see many learners who were obviously younger than six. Mr. Andreas, the Principal, said that parents should send their children to kindergarten, so that the learners do not find Grade 1 strange. Some learners are not able to communicate, and others cry or go home because they are hungry.

Ms. Lamek, a Grade 1 teacher, said that learners are ready for school when they start paying attention. Parents do send children under age 6. The school does not register them, but lets them sit in classes. This does not happen often.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Two of the children interviewed take books home. Two other learners said they are not allowed to take home texts or exercise books. Three of the learners receive help at home from siblings and parents.

Quality of Teaching and School

Wilhelm and Petrus said that their teachers are good because they do not beat learners. Fiina said her teacher is good because she teaches words like "mother" and "father."

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

Ms. Lamek requires that learners be able to do the following in order to be promoted: in Maths (looking at the book, she listed these competencies): compare things (size, height); write numbers 1 - 10; do the four operations with numbers 1 - 4; understand sets up to sets of 5 things.

Mr. Joseph had a difficult time listing basic competencies for Grade 2. He was only able to say that learners should be able to read sentences from a book in Ndonga (he could not give us any examples, nor the title of the book); and in English, learners should be able to read and write "mother," "father," and "eating." In our discussion, Mr. Joseph would have preferred to concentrate on what learners should know how to read after Grade 1, such as "pa" and "ma," rather than on his own Grade.

Teaching Methods

Classroom observation: Grade 1 Oshindonga oral lesson

The teacher told a story about three goats and a lion. She used a piece of posterboard with a drawing on it. After telling the story, the teacher asked the learners questions about it. More than half the learners got the answers correct. Then the teacher asked individual learners to recite the story. It was clear that the learners had listened to and practised this story many times. A few learners were able to repeat the whole story word-for-word.

The learners, for the most part, paid attention. Two learners were eating an orange in class, and a few were playing and singing softly to themselves.

Grade 1: English lesson

The teacher wrote words on the board (cooks, buys, meat, looks, for, eggs, mother; and the following sentences: Mother cooks food. Mother buys meat. Mother looks for eggs. Mother eats meat). The learners repeated the words and sentences after the teacher, chorally. The learners did not read individually, and learners always repeated after the teacher, never reading words without her guidance. It is not certain that the learners are able to read the words.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Training in Assessment and Methods of Assessment

To have a uniform understanding of assessment, the staff at this school need to have more than the occasional week of in-service training at Ongwediva. Mr. Andreas said that his teachers get training at Ongwediva, but that is it hard for those who do not attend to understand the information.

Ms. Lamek learned how to do assessment from the former Grade 1 teacher, who taught her that method in 1982. Ms. Lamek had not heard of continuous assessment, but explained a system that involves CA as a component. When she gives something to a child to do in class, she records a mark. Ms. Lamek showed us a book with marks. At the end of Terms 1 and 2, she puts the marks together to get a symbol and to know whether a learner passed or failed. At the end of the year, however, she gives an exam. She adds the Term 1 and 2 marks to the exam mark to get a final symbol for each learner. She did not explain the relative weights of CA and the exam.

Mr. Joseph, who teaches Grade 2, learned how to do assessment while doing his ECP. He was taught to give easy, medium, and hard questions because not all learners have the same talents. Mr. Joseph gets all symbols from tests. He said that two weeks into the year, he starts collecting marks, and chooses some of these for the symbol. He was unable to explain how this process works. His learner evaluation book had only two marks for each subject in Term 1 and no marks for any subjects for Term 2 (as of the end of July).

When asked for a test book listing the tests given to learners, Mr. Joseph said that he does not keep one, but just writes tests on the board. Further, learners do not writes tests in books, but on loose pieces of paper, which they take home.

As a consequence of his way of doing things, we were unable to look at how Mr. Joseph tests learners or how the learners are doing. More of concern, of course, is that Mr. Joseph has no record of how learners are assessed.

Syllabi and Schemes of Work

The Principal and teachers do not have syllabi. In answer to the question of whether the school has syllabi, Mr. Andreas said, "I can't say really. What do [the teachers] say?"

Ms. Lamek has only the new English syllabus for Grade 1. For the other subjects, she uses the Schemes of teachers who taught at the school before 1982. Mr. Joseph confirmed that he does not have syllabi, but copies Schemes from those used by former teachers.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence

The Inspector writes comments on Exams Schedules (which may or may not be returned to schools). Several schools visited had not received their Exams Schedules back from the circuit office. While the Inspector writes comments on Exams Schedules, he does not follow-up with the schools. He does not make clear what the promotion subjects are for each Grade, nor does he suggest ways the school might improve the pass rate.

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
Policy at the time: Medium of Instruction oral and reading; Maths; handwriting.

The Principal is not up-to-date on the promotion subjects, and neither is the Grade 1 teacher. Asked about promotion subjects, Mr. Andreas replied, "It is difficult for me -- this year it is so, another year so." He said that he gets information from the circuit office, and the requirements change year to year. Now the requirements are, for Grades 1 to 3: Ndonga, Maths, handwriting, and environment.

Ms. Lamek said the promotion subjects are Maths; Ndonga and English (both oral and reading); handwriting; environment; and religion. From 1992, Ndonga writing is not a promotion subject, according to the circuit office. A learner can still be promoted if he fails one or two subjects, as long as the learner passes Ndonga.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3
Policy at the time: Medium of Instruction oral, reading and writing; English oral and reading; Maths; and handwriting.

Mr. Joseph does not know the promotion subjects. He listed the promotion subjects as: Ndonga oral and reading; English oral, reading, and writing; Maths; environment; religion; and handwriting. A learner cannot pass if he fails Ndonga, but may pass if he fails English.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

According to Ms. Lamek, a learner's total marks determine whether he passes or fails Grade 1. In Term 1 of 1994, she included Oshindonga, English, Maths, Bible, handwriting, and environment in the total, and used the total to determine pass/fail (a minimum of 40% to pass). Out of 32 learners, 17 passed (54%). Based on the Ministry policy for that term, 20 learners should have passed (63%). On Ms. Lamek's Exam Schedule, the Inspector wrote "Improve please."

In the other Grade 1 class (whose teacher, Ms. Nehale, is out on maternity leave and her class is now part of Ms. Lamek's class), 16 out of 32 learners passed (50%). Following Ministry policy, 22 learners, or 69% of the learners, should have passed. Also on Ms. Nehale's Exam Schedule, the Inspector wrote "Improve please."

Both Grade 2 teachers use the same promotion subjects as the Grade 1 teachers. Based on the system of using the total to decide passing or failing, in Grade 2, 34 out of 71 (48%) passed. Using Ministry policy, 38 learners (53%) should have passed. On these Exam Schedules, the Inspector wrote "Weak results. Improve please," and "Improve please."

In Grade 3, the teachers included the same promotion subjects as for the lower Grades, and passed learners with 40% or more of the total marks. There is one other point of confusion, with teachers thinking that the minimum percentage to pass Ndonga is 62% instead of 40%, as stipulated by the Ministry. [It is possible that this confusion arises from the fact that the example used in NIED 42/93 to show whether a learner passes, uses 62 out of 100 as the mark for one learner, and then says he passes. See the section of this report discussing NIED Exams circulars for further discussion.]

In Grade 3, 57 out of 85 learners (67%) passed. By Ministry guidelines, 69 (81%) should have passed.

It is important to note that there may well be other factors operating that should also be addressed. Improving the quality of the teaching, and the relevance of the assessment to what is taught, and so on, would have different effects on the pass rate. However, simply taking the marks as given on the Exam Schedule, the above corrections to the number of learners passing are accurate.

Condonation

The Principal said condonation is uncommon at the school.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Ms. Lamek, a Grade 1 teacher, said that it is important to reduce failure so that many children can be educated. Ms. Lamek sees the following as ways to reduce failure: to have learners work hard; to have parents send their children to school daily, and to come and see what the children are doing and help them at home; and for teachers to teach hard and change their way of teaching if learners do not understand.

Mr. Joseph said that for learners to pass in greater numbers in Grade 2, they need to be taught better in Grade 1. They should not memorize words in the reading book and need to be able to write their names by the time they get to Grade 2. In short, he tried to place all credit and blame on the Grade 1 teachers, rather than thinking of what might happen in Grade 2, or throughout all the Grades.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Some of the teachers are at odds with the Principal. Mr. Andreas would like to remove one Grade 2 teacher, but is unable to do so. He said of the other teachers: the qualified ones say "I can do what I want," and do not pay attention to the Principal. The unqualified teachers only work for the money, as they expect to be replaced by qualified teachers.

Mr. Andreas, when asked whether teachers work together, said "everyone is on his own."

Ms. Lamek said that she enjoys working with the Principal because he is critical of teachers who are not working hard.

Between School and Community/parents

Mr. Andreas said of the parents that "they do not know what is school." While he said he calls parents to discuss matters, and has parent-teacher meetings, Mr. Andreas said that few parents come. There is not much communication between the school and homes.

Mr. Andreas said that the School Board used to be good, but now it thinks it has power over everything. Members of the school board said that the Inspector said "that they have the power, not the Principal." Considering the Inspector's comments about the Principal being a poor manager, it is possible that the Inspector has told the parents they must run the school.

10. Recommendations

Clarify what the promotion subjects are and how pass/fail is to be decided.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 5

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	65%	70%	73%
2	56%	45%	75%
3	21%	32%	56%

This school is quite unusual, with higher pass rates in Grade 1 than in Grade 3. Further, there is quite a lot of variation in the pass rates within Grades, especially in Grade 3.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Hangula	11	2	30
Grade 1A	Ms. Ndengu	11	none	7
Grade 1B	Ms. Uusiku	9	2	20
Grade 2B	Ms. Amupolo	12	2	8
Grade 3B	Mr. Kapule	11	none	10

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is about 50 kilometers from Oshakati in Omusati in Ondangwa II. There are 16 teachers for about 700 learners in Grades 1 to 8. The medium of instruction is Ndonga.

The Inspector told us that the Principal, Mr. Hangula, is an alcoholic and a bad Principal who allows learners to mark other learners' exams, drinks with the learners, and stole the school development funds. The Deputy Principal is good, but cannot control the school. The Inspector said "I do not trust the results of that school." The Inspector in late July said that he was last at the school in January.

The school has a very strange atmosphere. The learners stared at the research team in an unfriendly way. When we tried to interview learners, the other learners crowded around us, even around the truck as we sat in it to interview one learner. The children came close, refusing to go away, rocking the car. The research assistants said they had never seen children behave that way.

Teachers tried to tell learners not to peer in windows when we were inside classrooms, but the learners ignored them. Teachers did not seem to have much control during lessons, with learners shouting and making noise in the classrooms. Not surprisingly, many of the school windows are broken, and door handles have been stolen.

The school did not receive our letter, and no one was expecting our arrival. The Deputy Principal said that the Principal, who was absent the first day we visited, was at court. When the Principal returned to school the next day, he said he had been at the circuit office.

2. **Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail**
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

Mr. Kapule, who teaches Grade 3, said that learners fail because "children don't fear anything; these days a teacher can't punish them." According to Mr. Kapule, if teachers were permitted to beat learners, fewer learners would fail.

Parents

Both parents who commented on why learners fail held teachers responsible, to an extent not seen at other schools. Trecia Uukongo said that in some classes very few learners pass and that a few teachers do not care if learners fail.

Justus Nekundi, a pensioner, said that learners fail because teachers do not go to classes, particularly on pay day. Both teachers and parents are responsible for reducing failure.

Learners

Learners focussed on their own responsibility in failure. Johannes, who is in Grade 1, failed last year because he failed Maths and Ndonga reading.

Agnes, who is in Grade 2 and has not failed, believes that learners fail because they do not learn hard. Michael is in Grade 3, after having failed Grade 3 last year. He failed because he could not read English.

Daniel, who is in Grade 2, did not know why learners fail. Mary, who is in Grade 3, failed Grade 2 because she could not read Ndonga.

Placing Blame for Failure

Most of the adults interviewed consider teachers at this school at fault for failure. Mr. Hangula did not say what he thought responsible for failure, only that parents do not ask why learners fail. Instead, they talk badly about the school in the community and say that teachers are not good.

Ms. Ndengu said that sometimes the teacher is responsible for failure, but also the learner, for not saying anything in class.

Mr. Kapule said that parents do not contribute to learners' failure.

Parents

Parents think bad teachers are at fault for failure, but also hold their children responsible. Elizabeth Iiyambo said that one year when failure was high, the teacher was blamed because he drank too much and was absent a lot.

Trecia Uukongo said that in general, teachers are responsible for failure because they are unqualified. Teachers teach subjects they do not know well.

Learners

Learners, as at other schools, are told that they are responsible for their own failure. Agnes' brother failed last year, and her parents hold him responsible.

When Michael failed Grade 3, his parents did not feed him that day. They told him to learn hard, but he said he has no one to help him with English.

Daniel, a Grade 2 learner, said that learners blame teachers for failure.

Mary's parents did not feed her when she failed Grade 2, despite the fact she was ill for a month before exams. Mary is in Grade 3 now.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed

Those Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

The percentages of learners each teacher expects to pass at year end does not differ too much from pass rates last year.

In Ms. Ndengu's Grade 1 class, 31 out of 52 (60%) passed in term 1 of 1994. She said it is not a good number, that 40 should have passed (77%). Ms. Ndengu expects 30 out of 50 to pass (60%) at the end of the year. She did not know what the pass rates are for Grades 2 or 3.

Ms. Ampolo, who teaches Grade 2, expects 38 out of 45 learners (84%) to pass this year.

Mr. Kapule expects 30 out of 61 (49%) to pass this year in his Grade 3 class. He later said that only half of a class passing is not okay, but that to have one-third fail is "nothing."

School Concern over Pass Rate

Mr. Hangula, the Principal, was unaware of differences in pass rates between Grades and across years. He went on to say that high numbers of learners passing may not mean the teacher is good. If the teacher is doing things properly, a high pass rate is good. Otherwise, it is not good.

Ms. Ndengu said that the staff discusses pass/fail in meetings. When many learners fail, the Principal blames teachers. When many pass, he congratulates them. According to Ms. Ndengu, some teachers change their way of teaching based on Mr. Hangula's critique. Ms. Ndengu gave an example of how a teacher might change his way of teaching. He might stop trying to teach a learner to read the whole word "tate," and start first with the syllable "ta" and then "te." She was certain that a teacher would not just pass learners to please the Principal, because "that would be deceiving the learners."

Ms. Ndengu is the only teacher who spoke of the Principal as being concerned about pass rates. In our talks with the Principal, he did not seem particularly well-informed or concerned about the pass rates.

Ms. Uusiku said that some teachers do not care how many learners pass. They just say "[the learners] don't want to learn." If many learners fail, the teacher is bad and did not work hard. She said that if more learners are passing in Grade 3, the teachers have become better. She did allow that it was possible that teachers may pass more learners just to please the Principal.

Ms. Uusiku said that more learners pass in Grade 1 than in Grade 3 because Grade 3 is harder. This explanation is quite different from the explanations at other schools where the pass rates in Grade 1 are much higher than in Grade 3, as in School 6. At other schools, teachers explain a low Grade 1 pass rate in terms of learner unreadiness for school.

Whether teachers' beliefs influence the pass rates, or whether these teachers simply look for a ready explanation when asked questions about the pass rate, is not certain. What is clear, though, is that schools develop their own ways of conceiving of pass/fail and their own norms and practises, which determine the rate at which learners progress (or do not progress) through the system.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

The Principal and teachers all said that it would be impossible for all the learners in a class to pass. Mr. Hangula said it is impossible for all learners to pass, as they do not all have the same capacity of reasoning.

Ms. Ndengu said it would be impossible for all the learners in a class to pass. Children do not understand in the same way. Some children sit the whole year in class and do not know anything. Asked what her colleagues would do if all of her class passed, Ms. Ndengu said that they would congratulate her. The might also think that she had condoned children and interview them or look at their tests to be sure all the learners should have passed.

Ms. Uusiku, a Grade 1 teacher, said it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass. Children do not have the same understanding. Some learners can read the whole day and have nothing in their minds.

Mr. Kapule, a Grade 3 teacher, said that it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because some learners have problems understanding work in class.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

There is wide variation in the Principal's and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and probably a similar range in the actual level of involvement for different parents.

Mr. Hangula said that parents come once a term to discuss problems. This estimate of frequency of visits is much higher than any other interviewee suggested. He said that parents get reports at the middle and end of the year. Parents come the last day to get reports. Many parents cannot read, so they listen for the list of names of those who passed to be read.

Ms. Ndengu said that parents do come to watch lessons. Last year, 2 parents came to her class. Parents were invited in a parents' meeting. She is happy to be visited, as parents can find out whether their children know anything.

Ms. Ampolo, who teaches Grade 2, said that the parents of learners who are absent a lot are called to school often.

Ms. Uusiku, a Grade 1 teacher, said that not many parents help with their childrens' education. They often send their children to get water far away, keep them home to stamp mahongo, or have them collect cattle rather than go to school.

Parents

According to parents, they have not been invited to visit the school. Only those parents on the School Committee and those who take the initiative have visited school or watched classes.

Elizabeth Iiyambo visits the school often and watches lessons without invitation. She pointed out that few parents know their rights to visit the school and so few come. She is a member of the School Committee, which meets often and discusses learner and teacher behaviour. Some teachers leave school to drink for a week at a time. Pressure to expel these teachers comes from the Committee.

According to Elizabeth, the parents built the traditional classrooms which have since been replaced by permanent structures.

Lazarus Daniel visits the school to see what is happening and to see how his children are doing. He also checks their attendance. He has not been invited to school, but comes anyway.

Trecia Uukongo has not visited the school in some time. She used to visit when she was on the School Committee. She said that parents do not get reports of their childrens' progress, nor are they invited to school.

Justus Nekundi has not visited the school and has not been invited to do so.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

For a Grade 1 teacher, Ms. Ndengu, readiness means being 6 years old. Ms. Ndengu said that she has 8 learners who are 5 years old, and it takes them a long time to understand what happens in class. They are more likely to fail Grade 1 than children who are 6 or older. These underage children come to school because parents force them to. Parents complain that the Principal does not want children to learn if he refuses to take them, so he allows the underage children to come to school. Ms. Uusiku, the other Grade 1 teacher, also has some learners aged 5, who play rather than paying attention.

Ms. Ampolo, a Grade 2 teacher, said that some learners who pass Grade 1 are unable to write Ndonga, but they can read it. She tries to help them catch up with other learners.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Alina, a Grade 1 learner, does not take books home, but she does take sticks to practise counting. Her sisters and parents help her.

Agnes, who is repeating Grade 2, does not take books home, and her parents do not help her or her brother with work.

Michael, who is repeating Grade 3, has no books to take home and receives no help at home.

Mary, a Grade 3 learner, shows her books to her parents, who help her. Her mother also visits the school to see how Mary is doing.

Agnes and Michael said that their teachers are good because they do not beat learners.

Attendance and Pass Rates

In Grade 1A, generally 35 learners out of 52 attend daily (67%). Some days more than 20 learners are absent. There is no clear relationship between passing and high attendance, or failing and low attendance.

In Grade 3B, one-fourth to one-third of the learners are absent daily. There is no relationship between passing and attendance.

5. Quality of educational experience Relationship between what is taught and assessed

What Learners Are Taught in Each Grade

As many teachers did not share Schemes of work or learner books, it is hard to comment on what is taught to learners.

Ms. Ndengu gave us some learner test books. In the Mathematika workbooks, learners had filled in pages in counting and comparing objects of different sizes. The teacher had checked all the work, but made some mistakes in the marking (one learner had written the number "10" as "01," and it was marked correct).

Basic Competencies

Ms. Ndengu said that learners must be able to do the following in order to pass Grade 1: in reading Ndonga, they must know words like "tate," and short sentences like "Father is buying liver." These sentences come from their reading book. In Maths, learners must be able to write and read the numbers from 1 to 20, and add and subtract small numbers from one another.

Mr. Kapule, a Grade 3 teacher, had a difficult time listing basic competencies. In the languages, learners need to be able to read and write short sentences like "The fish is in the bowl" [the research team suggested this sentence to him, reading from a piece of posterboard he had up in the room]. In Maths, learners need to know the four operations and how to find the answers to 20 x 2, and 10 x 12. Mr. Kapule could give us no more information about what learners need to know to pass Grade 3.

Teaching Methods
(comments based on classroom observations)

Grade 1: Maths lesson

The teacher put - and + on the board and asked learners what these signs mean. Learners answered individually, correctly. Most hands went up to answer questions. Learners did addition problems, several learners using their fingers to count on (problems: 3 + 1, 2 + 2, 4 + 1, 2 + 1). When a learner got an answer wrong, Ms. Ndengu said "You didn't give us the right answer, so go sit down."

One learner missed 2 + 1. The teacher said, "If I have two fingers and add one finger, how many do I have?," illustrating this by holding up fingers. Learners came to the board to write in answers. One learner wrote "9" as "P." The teacher asked whether 9 faces left or right. Another learner wrote the number correctly.

In general, learners were paying attention, participating, and seemed to know much of what they were being taught.

Grade 3: Ndonga lesson, the days of the week

The teacher asked individual learners to write the days of the week (in Ndonga) on the board. The teacher called up only those learners in the front of the class, who had raised their hands. Several children misspelled words, and no one in the class could correct the mistakes. The teacher made the corrections and had learners copy the corrections into their books. Some learners had to borrow pens from other learners.

When children finished, they raised their hands to have the teacher mark their books. Not all the books were corrected. End of lesson.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Training in Assessment and Methods of Assessment

Ms. Ndengu, a Grade 1 teacher, in her ECP training, was taught to give tests every two weeks and to put the marks together at the end of the term. She was taught by an unqualified teacher at this school to look at the learner's total marks, and to pass learners with 40% or more.

None of the teachers knew of continuous assessment, though it is possible that the series of small tests given in some classes are used like the marks in CA.

Mr. Hangula said that teachers use exams as well as performance throughout the year, to decide promotion. He said that "the lower classes do not give exams, just little tests."

Ms. Ndengu, a Grade 1 teacher, said that symbols come from tests and recitation.

For Ms. Ampolo, a Grade 2 teacher, assessment means giving tests.

Ms. Uusiku said that she gives tests every two weeks and adds up marks at the end of the term.

Mr. Kapule, a Grade 3 teacher, gets symbols "from tests given from time to time."

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence

Mr. Hangula said that the Inspector writes comments on Exams Schedules and sends them back to schools. On the 1994 term 1 Exam Schedules, the Inspector wrote the following comments [percentages added by the researcher]:

Grade 1A: "Thank you. Improve next time." (68% pass)
1B "Improve next time. Thank you for better results now." (79% pass)

Grade 2A: "Improve next time." (55% pass)
2B: "Work for betterment." (65% pass)

Grade 3A: "Shocking results. What is wrong." (35% pass)
3B: [nothing written on this Exam Schedule] (26% pass)

Competence and Trust

Mr. Hangula said he checks Exams Schedules because class teachers decide promotion, and "some teachers may hate a learner." If the Principal asks to see test or exam papers, a teacher may say the child never wrote the exam, while the learner says he did. It is possible that the teacher just loses papers and does not want to admit it. Some teachers are at school "only for earning money," and always want to go home. They do not teach well.

Mr. Hangula said that he never was trained to be a Principal, that he needs help and that his teachers need in-service training.

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2

Policy at the time: Medium of instruction (oral and reading); Maths; handwriting. According to MEC policy at the time, learners must pass Ndonga and may fail either of the other two subjects and still be promoted.

Among the staff, there is little agreement on what the promotion subjects are. The Principal included English as a promotion subject, which is incorrect, and did not specify that a learner must pass Ndonga.

Mr. Hangula said that the promotion subjects for Grade 1 are: Ndonga reading and oral; English; Maths; and handwriting. If a learner fails one of these subjects, he can be promoted.

Ms. Ndengu does not know the promotion subjects. She left out Ndonga oral, and included English and Environment as promotion subjects. She incorrectly stated that both Maths and Ndonga must be passed for a learner to be promoted.

Ms. Uusiku correctly listed said the promotion subjects as Ndonga reading and oral; Maths; and handwriting. She said all parts of Ndonga must be passed for a learner to be promoted.

Mr. Hangula thinks that the following are the promotion subjects in Grade 2: English; Maths; environment; and handwriting.

Ms. Ampolo said that the promotion subjects for Grade 2 are: Ndonga reading; Maths; and handwriting. The only component missing is Ndonga oral.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

Policy at the time: Medium of instruction oral, reading, and writing; Maths; handwriting; and English oral and reading. A learner must pass Ndonga and may fail one of the other three promotion subjects, and still be promoted.

Again there is no agreement on what the promotion subjects are, and neither the Principal nor the Grade 3 teacher is correct.

Mr. Hangula said the promotion subjects in Grade 3 are Ndonga; English; Maths; environment; and handwriting. Mr. Kapule listed the promotion subjects as English and Ndonga reading, writing, and oral.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Teachers use individual procedures that are not in keeping with Ministry policy to determine pass/fail. What follows is a sample of teachers' comments and excerpts from Exams Schedules.

Mr. Hangula said that the Ministry gives guidance in promotion. If a learner fails Maths or English, he cannot be promoted [this statement differs from the one Mr. Hangula made above; it is incorrect, as the policy was that a learner must pass Ndonga.] He added that 34% is passing in all subjects, except for Ndonga, which is 40% [also incorrect, as the passing percentage in Grades 1 - 3, for all subjects, is 40%]. He was confident that his teachers are comfortable doing percentages despite the fact that earlier he pointed out that his teachers are not good at Maths. He explained that the teachers take the marks, add them up, and find the percentage by taking the learner's marks divided by total marks, then multiplying by 100 (which is correct).

Grade 1

The Grade 1 teachers use the correct promotion subjects: Ndonga, Maths, and handwriting, to determine pass/fail. However, they look at total percentages, rather than each subject on its own. Further, there is confusion over how to figure out what the minimum mark needed to pass a subject is. For instance, both teachers use 37 out of 75 (49%), instead of 30, as the minimum mark needed for Maths. They use 12 out of 25 (48%) as the minimum needed to pass handwriting.

Ms. Ndengu, a Grade 1 teacher, in explaining how she gets a percentage from total marks, divided 60 by 200, getting 30% (correct). She said that a learner must pass Ndonga in order to be promoted. In her Exams Schedule for 1994, Ms. Ndengu lowered (from 1993) the minimum marks required to pass in Ndonga from 50 to 40%. She explained that it was changed because too few learners were passing with the higher minimum mark. This change is in keeping with MEC policy, though Ms. Ndengu was unaware of that.

Ms. Uusiku, the other Grade 1 teacher, said that learners need to have 40% total marks to pass. Ms. Uusiku was unable to explain how she determined the minimum marks required for promotion. Ms. Uusiku, along with Ms. Ndengu, was told by the Principal that the minimum mark for Ndonga in 1994 should be 40, not 50 out of 100 as it was in 1993. So they changed the minimum mark on the Exam Schedules. In term 1 of 1994, 71 out of 104 (68%) of the learners passed. Following Ministry guidelines, the same number of learners should have passed.

Grade 2

The Grade 2 teachers use a similar system, looking at total marks to determine pass/fail. As with the Grade 1 teachers, the Grade 2 teachers have problems determining minimum marks for individual subjects, but are able to determine whether each learner has 40% or more total marks. In Maths, both teachers have 25 out of 75 (33%) as the minimum, and 12 out of 25 (48%) as the minimum mark in handwriting. Out of a total of 77 Grade 2 learners, 52 (or 68%) passed. Using Ministry guidelines, 55 learners (71%) should have passed Term 1 of 1994.

Ms. Ampolo, a Grade 2 teacher, said she does not know how symbols are determined because she is new here and has only given one test in April of this year.

Grade 3

The extremely low pass rates of previous years persist in 1994 in Grade 3. In 3A, 22 out of 62 learners (35%) passed, and in 3B 16 out of 61 (26%) passed Term 1. The teachers include the following subjects in the total, which they use to decide pass/fail: Ndonga (100 marks), English (100 marks), Maths (100 marks), Bible (50 marks), handwriting (50 marks), and environment (50 marks). Two non-promotion subjects, Bible and environment, are given as much weight as handwriting, and half the weight of Ndonga and English, in determining pass/fail.

Furthermore, the Grade 3A teacher miscalculated the percentage needed to pass, at 50% instead of 40%. And finally, he miscalculated learners' percentages. For instance, one learner had a total of 180/450 marks. The teacher gave him 30%, and failed him when his percentage is actually 40, and he should have passed -- based on Ministry criteria (which do not look at the total, but at individual promotion subjects). In 3A, using the marks as given by the teacher, 34 out of 62 learners (55%) should have passed. The Grade 3A teacher passed only 35% of the class.

In the 3B class, two more learners should have passed, based on Ministry guidelines, for a total of 18 out of 61 (30%), not the 26% the teacher passed. Given the time the research team had at the school, and the fact that we could not get all the documents requested, we are unable to explain how 35 out of 61 learners failed Ndonga, and 38 failed English, and so on. The teacher was not helpful in explaining what had happened.

Summary

Whatever the reasons for the situation, there is great confusion over what the promotion subjects are, and how to determine pass/fail. Sometimes learners who ought to have passed are failed, because of an error in calculation, or a misunderstanding of MEC policy.

However, teachers and Principals cannot be held responsible for their lack of information. As discussed more fully in the main body of this report, the system is set up in such a way that it is difficult for schools to get the necessary information and the help to implement policies as intended by the Ministry.

Condonation

Mr. Hangula said that learners are condoned to the next Grade after three years in one Grade. He added that condonation is common at the school.

The Inspector condones learners with an overall percentage of 38 or above, marking these learners as passing on the Exams Schedules.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

According to most of the parents interviewed, there used to be a great deal of fighting among the learners. There is less conflict now, but it is not entirely gone.

There is mistrust between the Principal and some teachers, the causes of which are not fully known. Moreover, the lines of communication, for instance in deciding promotion, are poor.

Between School and Community/parents

Several parents want more information from the school about how their children are doing. Elizabeth Iiyambo said "we get letters only when a child has done something wrong -- we need to know all year long." She does not receive school reports or exam results. Lazarus Daniel also said he does not get reports, and gets "letters only when children are wrong, not when they are right."

More than one parent said they would like to visit the school if they knew they were welcome.

Between School and Regional Office

This school, along with the other eleven schools in the study, suffers from lack of assistance from the regional level. The school is rarely visited, and "help" comes in the form of a few words written on an Exams Schedule.

ONDANGWA
SCHOOL 6

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	31%	27%	34%
2	39%	50%	56%
3	52%	53%	60%

This school has considerably higher (but still low) pass rates in Grade 3 than in Grade 1. We sought to understand what beliefs and practices produced such low pass rates in Grade 1 at this school.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Kamati	12	2	19
Grade 1A	Mrs. Nkede	11	2 (ECP)	2
Grade 1B	Ms. Shivute	11	none	6
Grade 2A	Ms. Ashili	10	2	

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is in Omusati, about 50 kilometers from Oshakati. The medium of instruction is Oshindonga. For about 550 learners in Grades 1 to 8, there are 15 teachers.

Mr. Kamati, the Principal, welcomed us to the school. He had received the letter from the Inspector, and was pleased we had chosen to come to his school. He hoped we might offer some advice to them. He said he did not mind whether we named the school in our report.

When we arrived, learners were in classes and generally quiet.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and
Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Mr. Kamati, the Principal, said that Grade 1 learners fail because the classes are overcrowded, making it is hard to reach learners. Because there is no pre-primary, learners are not ready for school. Further, there are poor resources at the school. In addition, parents "do not know what school is." [There are many learners in the Grade 1 classes at this school -- in 1994, 52 in each class. Yet in other schools with class sizes of 60, 70, up to 106 learners, the pass rates are not necessarily low].

Mr. Kamati continued, saying that unqualified teachers do not have good teaching methods. The qualified teachers want to teach higher Grades, and "the others are just trying," not teaching very well. He qualified his statement about teachers by saying that he "lost" one really good Grade 3 teacher who was not certified to teach, but who was "a teacher from birth." Many of this teacher's learners passed, and learned a lot in his class. This statement was supported when a learner spoke of his former Grade 3 teacher, who was much better than the one he has now.

Mr. Kamati said that teachers explain the high failure rates by saying that there are too many learners and too wide a range of abilities in a class. Mr. Kamati added that if a learner is quiet, he can go a whole year in a class without being asked a question. This position, that quiet or shy learners are more likely to be failed than their peers who participate, was supported when one of the Grade 1 teachers complained about quiet children who are not ready for school.

Ms. Nkede, who teaches Grade 1A, said that learners fail because they fail Ndonga and English reading and writing.

Parents

Klaudia Nangolo said that both of her children failed in Grade 1 because they failed Ndonga. She added that many learners failed that year.

Desderia Josef, who could not remember how many times one of her children had failed Grade 1, said that he failed because maybe he did not catch what the teacher was teaching. He failed English and Ndonga.

Desderia went on to say that a long time ago, no one knew the meaning of failure. Only now do people see it is bad. In the past, people thought there had to be failure in school. [Actually, it seems that at this school, the teachers do not yet see failure as "bad," but expect it as part of schooling].

All three of Selma Linus' children have failed. She does not know why. One of her children, Sarah, spent two years in Grade 1, two years in Grade 2, and is in her third year of Grade 3. The teacher said that Sarah is not a weak learner, only "stubborn." Sarah does not do what she is told and for this she is failed, repeatedly.

Angelina Norbert's daughter failed Grade 1 because she did not "learn hard" and was absent. Angelina said she blamed herself for the absences because her daughter missed school to take the cattle to drink. Angelina punished her daughter by making her take the cattle to manure the land for two days. Then she told her daughter to learn hard in order to pass.

Natalia Alweendo said that two of her children have failed Grade 1 twice. She does not know why because she cannot read their reports. She added that some learners fail because parents keep them out of school to look after cattle.

Learners

Sylvia, who is in her third year in Grade 2, does not know why she is failing. She added that "I am tired of being in Grade 2." The teacher "knocks me in the head and tells me to go and learn at home."

Of 9 learners interviewed at this school (four of whom were expected by teachers to pass this year), all had failed at least one time.

Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Mr. Kamati's children have repeated grades. He explained their failure in terms of teachers "not being progressive." Mr. Kamati asked the Grade 2 teacher why his child had failed and the teacher said the child could not read. Mr. Kamati asked why and the teacher said she did not know. His son also said he did not know why he had failed.

Placing Blame for Failure

The Principal lays blame for failure on the teachers. Mr. Kamati said that teachers in the lower Grades think they "can sit a bit." They want to rest, not teach, and this contributes to failure.

Ms. Shivute said that some parents blame teachers for making children fail.

Parents

Parents are of many minds when it comes to the responsibility for failure. They have seen their own children, and many other learners, fail year after year. Parents credit both teachers and learners for failure. Most of the parents are troubled by failure at the school, but do not know what to do.

Klaudia Nangolo said that when many learners fail in Grade 1, it happens because learners do not catch what the teacher was teaching. She said that maybe the responsibility is the parents' for not paying attention to learners at home.

When her children failed, Klaudia considered it their fault "for having hard heads." She said it was also her own fault because she could not help them. Klaudia said that the teacher did not do anything extra to help the children pass, but she did not blame the teacher.

Desderia Josef said that parents feel bad about failure but they cannot blame the teacher. She did not know whether failure is the fault of the learners or the teachers, but concluded that if some learners pass and others fail, the learner must be blamed.
Desderia went on to say that no one should fail. When asked what she thought of 40 out of 50 learners failing, she said she would feel bad if she were the teacher. She would have to improve her skills. Desderia went on to say that teachers feel bad about failure. "You can see it in their faces" at the end of the year. They feel ashamed. Some parents think, "If learners fail, what is the use of their coming to school?," but the community does not ask what is happening. The School Committee asked why so many learners fail, and the teachers said, "We are always at school. If they fail it is because they can't read."

Selma Linus, whose daughter Sarah has been in school for 7 years, but is only in Grade 3, said that "maybe the system of teaching is not right." Sarah comes to school almost every day, so no one can say she isn't grasping anything. Asked who she holds responsible, Selma said that she does not want to blame the teacher, but Sarah. Selma added that "stubbornness can be a good reason to fail."

Lydia Erastus does not know whether her son France has failed [he has, according to France, two times.] She said that he is absent for no reason and that she refuses to feed him when he does this.

Learners

Jason, who has failed Grade 3 twice, blames himself for "not knowing how to calculate." Jason misses school because his parents make him take the cattle to drink, and his teacher does not help him after school, but Jason blames himself for his failure.

Wilhemine said she is in Grade 1 for the fifth time, and that she fails because of Ndonga. She has had the same teacher for 3 years in a row. Her mother blames her for not working hard.

Lovisa failed Grade 3 and was punished by her parents, who said she is wasting their money. They said she should leave school and stay home to cook for those who do well.

As at other schools, learners hold themselves, or are held by others, responsible for failure.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed
Those Learners Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mr. Kamati said that Grade 1 teachers do not think about pass/fail," otherwise they would say they are dissatisfied." Mr. Kamati is not satisfied with the pass rates in the first term of 1994.

In Grade 1A in Term 1 of this year, 12 out of 51 learners (24%) passed. Mrs. Nkede said that number is not good, that 30 should pass and only 31 should fail, because it is their first year in school. [She was unaware of her Maths mistake in this projection].

In 1B, Ms. Shivute's class, 9 out of 52 learners (17%) passed Term 1 of this year. She said that number passing was not good and that she expected many to pass. She expects 43 to pass and only 9 to fail at the end of the year. Ms. Shivute did not explain why she has these great expectations for change.

Ms. Ashili, a Grade 2 teacher, said that most pass in her class and few fail, because the learners concentrate. She went on to say that she expects 18 out of 36 (50%) to pass this year, and that having half a class fail is acceptable (in Term 1, 14 out of 37, or 38% of the class passed). Ms. Ashili seemed not to notice that her prediction of the number of learners to pass was not in keeping with having "most" of the learners pass. Of course, in comparison with Grade 1 pass rates, a pass rate of 50% would be high.

School Norms and Practices: failure and repetition

Mr. Kamati said that in the higher Grades, learners are promoted if they fail a grade 3 times. In the lower grades, this policy "does not work." Mr. Kamati said the teachers refuse to allow learners to pass if teachers consider them not ready.

Ms. Ashili, a Grade 2 teacher, said that if a learner fails three times in one Grade, he is promoted. She went on to say, as though it were perfectly obvious, that it is possible for a learner to pass Grade 3 if he has failed Grade 2.

Mr. Kamati added that "most learners are passive here," and that they expect to do Grade 1 two or three times. When asked whether learners dropout after failing numerous times, Mr. Kamati said that they do get discouraged, but do not dropout. One learner's parents transferred him to another school.

Ms. Nkede said that those learners repeating Grade 1 for the third or fourth time "are only wasting their time because they will only be taught the same things again." Ms. Shivute, the other Grade 1 teacher, said that there is no limit on the number of times a learner can repeat a Grade, but suggested that some learners should simply stop coming to school. She has told this to some parents of learners who continue to fail.

Ms. Shivute said that learners repeat in the same class they failed in the previous year, "so that they do not disturb others."

Parents

When asked what should happen if a learner has done Grade 1 four times, Klaudia Nangolo said that the parents and teacher should talk. In her own view, the most times a learner should repeat a grade, before being promoted, is twice.

Desderia Josef said that it is impossible to imagine that some Grade 1 learners are in the Grade for the fourth time. The teacher should pass them.

Selma Linus said that if Sarah fails again, she may transfer her to another school. In answer to the question of why the school might not want to reduce failure, Selma said, "because it has always been like that."

Learners

When asked if she knew any children who had spent only one year in each Grade, Klara (who failed Grade 1 and Grade 3) said, with admiration in her voice, that there is one girl who started school with her, who has not failed yet.

Reasons for Variation

Ms. Nkede said that more Grade 3 learners pass than Grade 1's because they can already read in Grade 3, and reading is hard for Grade 1's. Ms. Shivute, the other Grade 1 teacher, said that more Grade 1 and 2 learners fail than Grade 3 learners because younger children don't know the importance of school. Grade 3 learners know why they are at school.

Parents

Klaudia Nangolo said that more learners pass in Grade 3 than in Grade 1 because young ones think of only two things: food and playing. Grade 3 learners are focussed.

Whether it Is Possible for All the Learners in a Class to Pass

The Principal and two teachers agree that it is impossible that all the learners in a class should pass. Mr. Kamati said that it would be impossible to have all the learners in a class pass because some learners make progress and others do not. A good number to pass would be half, or even more than half.

Ms. Nkede said it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because not all have the same talents.

Ms. Shivute said it is not possible for all to pass in Grade 1, though it might happen in other Grades. If all the learners came daily, it might happen that they all pass.

Parents

Klaudia Nangolo said that she had never heard of all the learners in a class passing. If it happened, "maybe they are lucky and God has helped them to pass." She added that the "right" school is one where few learners fail.

Selma Linus said that it is impossible for all learners to pass, maybe because of overcrowding. She added that the school is good "because not all the learners are failing." This last statement is an indicator of how low the expectations of parents have fallen: a good school is a school where **not all** the learners are failing.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Kamati said that "these days, parents have no time for their children." Parents go to cuca shops, don't care whether their children attend school, and do not come to school even though they are invited. Education is not important to the community.

Ms. Shivute said that parents do not care about their childrens' education because they do not help learners do their homework.

Parents

Klaudia Nangolo said that many parents have "short minds" because they do not care about their children at school. Some parents say, "I pay school fees and send the children to school, so why do they call me to school?"

Selma Linus attends parents meetings. Once she was called to discuss her child's theft of another learner's pen.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

Mr. Kamati said that the parents on the school board, which is composed of 5 parents and 5 teachers, say they want to be paid for the job, that otherwise the work is a waste of time.

Parents

Klaudia Nangolo, when she was asked to come to the school, was afraid she had been called because the children were naughty. She was pleased to be called to talk with us. She had never been invited to school before that day she met with us.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mr. Kamati said that underage learners are not allowed to come to school.

Mrs. Nkede, a Grade 1 teacher, said that many learners do not know how to behave in class. They look at teachers, but cannot answer questions. She considers learners ready for school if they can write some letters of the alphabet and their names. Learners should be taught by their parents. Mrs. Nkede said that perhaps 10 of her learners this year were "ready" for school, according to this definition.

For Ms. Shivute, readiness has to do with paying attention and participation. Of some learners, she said, "they are so quiet you would think they don't talk!"

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home, and Learner Expectations

Sylvia is in Grade 2 for the third time, and expects to pass this year. She passed Term 1. She does not take books home.

Karista, who failed Grade 2 last year, gets help from her brother. She does not know whether she will pass this year.

Klara, who failed Grades 1 and 2, failed Term 1 of Grade 2 this year, but expects to pass. She said she is now serious.

Wilhemine's mother checks her books and teaches her to write. Wilhemine hopes to pass Grade 1 this time, as she knows how to read and write.

Augenia shows her books to her parents, and her mother teaches her reading.

France, who passed Grade 1 at another school but was sent back to Grade 1 at this school, does not take books home and has no one at home who can help him, as they are all illiterate. France passed Term 1.

Lovisa, who failed Grade 3, takes books home and is helped by her Grandmother and sister. She said "I am sure I will pass because I understand the subjects better now."

Quality of Teaching and School

None of the learners complained about teachers. Two learners said their teachers were good because they do not beat learners. Apart from these comments, learners said little about their teachers. They did not comment, as learners did at some other schools, on the teachers' skills or willingness to stay after school to help them when they were having problems.

Attendance and Pass Rates

The attendance registers of both Grade 1 classes and both Grade 2 classes show one-third to one-half the learners absent each day. Surprisingly, teachers and parents did not identify absenteeism as a factor in failure and there does not seem to be a relationship between passing and high attendance.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

Mrs. Nkede said that even though some years learners know more when they arrive and are able to progress faster than classes she has other years, she covers the same information every year. To pass Grade 1, learners must master the following things:
Ndonga: read "Silas ota kutha ekuya," and be able to do dictation.
Ms. Shivute, the other Grade 1 teacher, said that in English, learners must be able to read, write and say words like "mother, father, food, meat, looks, and buys," and write numbers from 1 to 10. The same requirements hold for Ndonga.

Teaching Methods
These comments are based on classroom observations and interviews.

Mrs. Nkede has many dashes in her Exams Schedule. She explained these as 0's. Learners can do work in class, but not on exams. Some learners have books open and are still unable to read. She said they memorize words in class, that they are not reading but listening to her.

This is not surprising, given the method for "teaching" reading. Learners repeat chorally, sentence by sentence, after the teacher. When the class "reads," learners do not need to have their books open.

Classroom observation: Grade 1 handwriting lesson

The class has stick walls and a zinc roof. Learner sit on benches in the sand and there are no desks or tables to write on. The teacher wrote lines of cursive, connected "c's" on the board, along with rows of "Cc" and "C" and "c." After spending 10 minutes handing out exercise books and pencils, the teacher told learners to copy the board.

Learners looked at one another, looked at the board, and tried to do the work. It was clear that learners did not know how to form the letters. Some learners turned their paper upside down, or to the side, to make part of the letter. Many learners looked at the board a long time, then stared at their paper and finally began writing.

The teacher did not explain or demonstrate how to form the letter, nor did she go around the room to check learners' progress. Instead, she stood at the front of the room and looked at learners who were making noise. Several times she hit learners on the head or shoulders with a meter stick.

After about 15 minutes, the teacher collected learners' books. She laughed at two boys whose work was not up to standard, and sent them back to their seats to do the exercise again. She did not give them any idea what they had done wrong or how to do it correctly. End of lesson.

Classroom observation: Grade 3: English lesson

The teacher read from the English text a page on "The family photo." The teacher read a line, the learners repeated chorally. At the end of the longer sentences, learners' voices became quieter, less sure, as though they were not able to remember the last part of what the teacher had said. Some learners were not looking at their books. It is likely that many of them were not reading from the text and that they cannot read.
The teacher wrote vocabulary words on the board (Grandpa, Grandma, pretty, tall, send, photo), and had learners repeat after him. He explained each word in Ndonga.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Mrs. Nkede, who finished her ECP in 1990, said that she learned in that course not to test learners in Grades 1 and 2. Instead, learners should write in their exercise books at the end of each lesson. The teacher should write something on the board, erase it, then have learners write what was on the board before she erased it. In the next breath, Mrs. Nkede said that symbols come from exams, not exercises.

Ms. Shivute has had no training in assessment. Like Mrs. Nkede, Ms. Shivute gets symbols from tests.

Ms. Ashili, a Grade 2 teacher, said she had no training in assessment in her two years at the teacher training college. She gets symbols from tests. Later, she said that she had heard of continuous assessment, which means giving marks for all classwork and putting them together with the exam at the end of the term. Ms. Ashili said she uses CA in class.

Syllabi and Schemes of Work and Learner Work

Mr. Kamati said that teachers have syllabi for some subjects. For the rest of the subjects, they make Schemes of Work based on textbooks.

Ms. Shivute said that she has a syllabus (an old one) for English, but for the other subjects she makes up a Scheme of Work from the texts.

Mrs. Nkede showed us learners' test books. Basic problems were not corrected, such as "J" and "y" written backwards. Ms. Shivute's learners' books had similar problems, with backwards "S's" not corrected. Learners were given sentences to write in dictation, but clearly knew nothing about spacing between words (the letters were crowded together, the words indistinguishable from one another). Both Grade 1 teachers seem to move quickly through material, without being sure that learners had mastered it.

The same principle held in Maths. Ms. Shivute gave problems like: 4 + 4, 12 + 3, 8 + 4, and 15 + 5. There were 10 problems, and the two learners whose books we looked at got 2/10 and 5/10 correct. The teacher put check marks by the problems that were correct, but did not correct the problems that were wrong. Nor did she have learners correct their own work. Rather, Ms. Shivute moved directly into the next subject.

Ms. Ashili showed us her test book for Term 1. In English, in which she said lessons were based on NAMPEP, the questions included:

> In which Grade are you?
> What is your father's name?
> Where do you live?
> How many mouth have you?
> Point your stomach?
> How many head have you?

Similar problems were found in all the teachers' test books.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence

The Inspector wrote the following comments on the Exams Schedules for Term 1 of 1994 [percentages added by the researcher]:

Grade 1A: "Shocking results. Advise teacher please." (23% pass).
Grade 1B: "This is 'disastrous' result. Reconsider your teaching and controls. Ask for help." (17% pass).

Grade 2A: "Thank you but improve." (38% pass).
Grade 2B: "Improve please." (33% pass).

Grade 3A: "Thank you." (51% pass).
Grade 3B: "Thank you but improve please." (46%).

It seems that apart from making these comments, the Inspector does nothing else to advise teachers and schools. The Inspector does not make comments about any of the mistakes made in promotion subjects or in figuring out minimum marks or in finding percentages to determine pass/fail (see the next section).

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2

Ministry policy at the time stipulates that the promotion subjects for Grades 1 and 2 are Home Language reading and oral; Maths; and handwriting.

None of the teachers correctly listed the promotion subjects. Mrs. Nkede said the promotion subjects for Grade 1 are Ndonga and English oral, reading, and writing; Maths; and environment or Bible.

Ms. Shivute said the promotion subjects are English and Ndonga oral, reading, and writing; Maths; and environment. Learners may fail Ndonga and still be promoted if they "cover up" with Bible or something else.

Ms. Ashili listed the promotion subjects for Grade 2 as Ndonga and English reading and writing; Maths; and handwriting.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Kamati said that the Exams Circulars are quite clear and that his teachers know how to get symbols and decide pass/fail. Mrs. Nkede also said that circulars give information on pass/fail, including numbers for minimum and maximum for each subject.

Grade 1

Ms. Shivute gave us the same information about deciding pass/fail as Mrs. Nkede did. They said that the Principal instructed the teachers to divide the total marks by 5 to get a percentage for each learner. In Term 1 of 1994, Ms. Shivute had expected more learners to pass (only 17% passed), but when she divided by 5, she found that many had failed. Mrs. Nkede found the same phenomenon. Neither teacher did anything to find out what might have happened in her calculations. Ms. Shivute said it was possible that learners had panicked in the exams.

Actually, the problem was that she was not finding a percentage when she divided by 5. There were five subjects she included in the total [which is not in keeping with Ministry policy], but not all the subjects were worth 100 marks. The total marks came to 400, not 500, so dividing by 5 automatically made all learners' 'percentages' much lower than they should have been.

Using Ministry policy and the marks as given in Ms. Shivute's Exam Schedule, 17 learners out of 43 (40%), not 9 learners (17%), should have passed Term 1. In Mrs. Nkede's class, 16 out of 51 (31%), not 12 (23%) should have passed.

Another problem in the Grade 1 marks is the abundance of "--" or dashes instead of numbers for learners' performance. In Grade 1B, out of 52 learners, 19 had dashes in some component of Ndonga; 35 had dashes in some part of English; and 18 had dashes in handwriting. In Grade 1A, 20 out of 51 learners had dashes in Ndonga; and 29 had dashes in English. These dashes counted as "0's" in learners' marks, which made them likely to fail that subject.

Ms. Shivute explained dashes in the Exams Schedules as her colleague, Mrs. Nkede did: "she don't do anything." She was unable to explain how learners might sit through a number of lessons in which they learned to read words like "tate," and still were unable to read the word for an exam. When it was suggested that perhaps the learners had not learned to read or the exams were too hard, she said that was not the case.

It is clear that these Grade 1 teachers have serious problems with assessing learning appropriately and probably have problems teaching learners. Further, their understanding of how to determine pass/fail is not good and their Maths skills are poor. The effects of their ways of teaching and assessing learners are far-reaching. A large number of learners who should be passing Grade 1 are being failed at this school.

What is also clear is that it is inappropriate and unfair to place blame on these teachers. They are not malicious, and they are not failing learners with pleasure. Rather, the system is failing the teachers and ultimately the learners. Without training for Principals and teachers (and Inspectors) in teaching methods, assessment procedures and promotion policies, situations such as the one at this school will continue to slight learners.

Grade 2

The problems in Grade 2 are not as severe as those in Grade 1. The Grade 2 teachers use English and environment as promotion subjects. This is perhaps because these subjects are listed on the Exams Schedule, leading teachers to assume they should be included in the total.

Ms. Ashili said that an "F" symbol is passing in all the subjects. She was unable to explain why. Then she said that since this is her first term teaching, she does not know which term's symbol is used in deciding promotion. In her class, 14 out of 37 learners (38%) passed. Using Ministry policy, 20 learners (54%) should have passed. In the Grade 2B class, while the teacher used the same set of incorrect promotion subjects, the number of learners passing and failing (33%) would remain the same.

Grade 3

The Grade 3 teachers (neither of whom we were able to interview) correctly use Ndonga and English oral, reading, and writing as promotion subjects, along with Maths and handwriting. However, they also look at total marks to decide pass/fail, rather than each individual subject. In Grade 3A, 19 out of 37 learners (51%) were passed, while 22 (59%) should have passed using Ministry guidelines. In Grade 3B, 16 out of 35 (46%) passed, while 21 (60%) should have passed.

Summary

All together, in Grades 1 - 3, 85 out of 238 learners (36%) passed Term 1 of 1994, when 111 (47%) should have passed. This correction is based solely on the numbers provided by the teachers, not questioning the dashes or the assessment methods or the appropriateness of the lessons taught.

Condonation

No one mentioned condonation at this school, apart from promoting some learners in the higher Grades who have already failed the grade at least once.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Parents

Angelina Norbert said that both parents and teachers are responsible for reducing failure, as the teacher is the second parent for the child.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Between School and Regional Office

Mr. Kamati said that the Inspector "never talks to us." The school gets written comments on Exams Schedules, for instance, but there is no chance for discussion of how to implement change.

Final Interaction at the School

I met with the Principal and Grade 1 - 3 teachers for an hour to explain NIED 42/93 (which has since been supplanted by 3/94), and to practice doing percentages. The teachers and Principal were keen to learn, and asked questions to be sure they were clear about how to figure out percentages. By the end of the hour, most of the teachers seemed comfortable with how to figure out a percentage. It took some time to explain the promotion subjects, and the fact that the list in 42/93 does not match the Exams Schedule subject list. The teachers understood that they should use individual subjects, not totals, to decide pass/fail, and they were able to figure out minimum marks required for various maximum marks (25, 50, and 100).

The Principal thanked us for coming and said that the school needs this kind of assistance, "even if it is only an hour, like today." Mr. Kamati said that he had asked the Regional Office to send facilitators, but that no one had come even though they said they would. This school's staff seem hungry for help, for clarification of policies and for input into how to do their jobs better.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Make changes in the Exams Schedules, as suggested for other schools.

Educate parents about the need for regular school attendance.

Change norms operating at the school level (Principals and teachers) about acceptable failure rates.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 7

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	82%	63%	84%
2	81%	64%	95%
3	74%	73%	100%

This school had very high pass rates, especially in 1993, and these results were achieved by unqualified teachers. The research team was looking for explanations of the pass/fail results.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Mutuku	9	2	15
Grade 1	Ms. Serenyi	9 or less	none	13
Grade 2A	Mr. Attu	9 or less	none	18
Grade 3	Mr. Sikongo	9 or less	none	15

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is about 70 kilometers from Rundu. There are 12 teachers in the school and roughly 450 learners in Grades 1 - 7. The medium of instruction is Rukwangali.

The research team was welcomed by the Principal, Mr. Mutuku, who had received the letter about our visit. After an initial meeting with the Principal, the research team met with the teachers, who cooperated fully, immediately bringing all the record books requested.

We visited the school at the end of Term 2, during exams time. While many of the learners in the higher grades were not in classes, but sitting outside, the learners in Grades 1 - 3 were in classes. The Principal told us that learners in the lower grades do not take exams. This fact was confirmed by the teachers of Grades 1 - 3.

Directly across the street from the school are cuca shops. The Principal said that teachers do not go to drink during school hours, but sometimes learners do. The Principal does not know what to do about the problem.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail

At this school the focus is on why learners pass. School staff give credit for both passing and failing to learners and teachers. Mr. Mutuku said that most learners pass at the school. Learners pass because they work hard and fail when they do not work hard or when they miss a lot of school. Mr. Attu, a Grade 2 teacher, said that learners pass because "maybe we teach well." Mr. Sikongo, a Grade 3 teacher, said that he does not know why the numbers of learners passing are higher some years than others. He suggested that "sometimes you the teacher are not teaching them well."

Parents

Parents are well informed about the numbers of learners passing at the school. Hermine Wilbald said that most learners pass at this school. Kayando Makai's impression is that many learners pass at the school. Emilie Ngondo said that her daughter failed once in Grade 2 because she did not concentrate, but that in general many learners pass at the school because teachers teach well.

Parents blame learners for failing. Kayando Makai said that both her children failed Term 1 of this year in Grades 1 and 2. She does not know why because "I send them to school." She speculated that "maybe they don't get things quick." She went on to say that when learners fail it is because they are not learning.

Matheus Makuve said that the number of learners passing in 1993 at this school was okay. He said that his daughter failed once "because of her own stupidity." When she repeated, she took school more seriously.

Hermine Wilbald said that she does not know whether failure is the fault of the learner or the parents, but it is definitely not the fault of the teachers. Kayando Makai said that learners fail because they are lazy.

Learners

Learners list their own absenteeism and a lack of seriousness as factors in failure. Isangu, who is in Grade 1, said that learners fail because they do not know Maths or their letters.

Markus is in his third year in Grade 1 because of absenteeism. He misses lessons to look after cattle. He failed Term 1 of this year because of absenteeism and does not know whether he will pass this year.

Kosmos, a Grade 2 learner, said that learners fail because they cannot read and write and do not answer the teacher's questions. He failed Grade 1 once because of reading and Maths, which he failed because he did not study. Kosmos said that some learners blame the teachers for failure because "they cannot teach."

Godfrid, who is in Grade 2, said that learners fail "absolutely" if they fail English reading and writing. He failed Grade 1 once and expected to fail that year because he studied hard, although he was absent a lot to look after cattle.

Simfariana, a learner in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they do not learn. She addec that at her school, most learners pass and few fail.

Egidus, who is in Grade 3, said that learners fail because of absenteeism. He failed Grade 2 once. The teacher said he failed Maths and Rukwangali reading and that is why he failed the year. Egidus does not expect to pass this year because he has problems in English.

Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Mr. Sikongo's son failed Grade 2. Mr. Sikongo does not know why his son failed, saying "maybe he did not listen to the teacher" or maybe he failed because of his own laziness. Mr. Sikongo does not know how his son felt about failing, but said that his son became more serious about his studies after failing.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed
Those Who Pass Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Ms. Serenyi, the Grade 1 teacher, expects 44 out of 68 (65%) of the learners to pass this year. She said that a good number to fail would be only 14 (not the 18 she expects to fail). However, she then added that it would be acceptable for half the learners in a class to fail.

Mr. Sikongo, the Grade 3 teacher, expects 33 out of 68 (49%) to pass this year. He said that number is not good but did not know what a good number would be.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

The Principal, teachers and parents are unaware that in 1993 all the learners in Grade 3 were passed to the next Grade. Even the Grade 3 teacher who passed all the learners did not know that he had done so.

The Principal said that it is not possible for all the learners in class to pass because it has never happened at the school and because not all learners can be clever. One or two weak learners must always fail.

Mr. Attu, a Grade 2 teacher, said it has not happened that all the learners in a class pass and that it is not possible because not all the learners are the same. Some learners are clever and some struggle.

Mr. Sikongo, the Grade 3 teacher, said that it would be impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because "people are not the same" and some learners do not concentrate.

Parents

Kayando Makai thinks it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because people are not the same. She added that "teachers know which ones are clever and which ones are weak." When told that last year in a Grade 3 class with over 70 learners, all the learners passed, she said that "I can't know why that happened, but the teacher knows whether the learners really passed."

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Mutuku said that there is a School Board that monitors how well teachers are teaching and helps with problems such as absenteeism, fighting and theft. There are annual parents meetings. Many parents come because they are interested in their children's education. Some parents come on their own, uninvited, to see what is happening at school. The Principal is very pleased that parents are interested in the school.

Mr. Mutuku said that parents keep children out of school from January to March to look after cattle. Learners may miss school from mid-morning on every day to go look after cattle.

Parents

Hermine Wilbald has children in Grades 1 and 2. She has not heard anything about parents meetings, nor about a School Committee, and does not visit the school. She has not thought about the possibility of watching classes, but might do it if invited. Hermine said the children bring home books but, "It cannot help for them to show me because I am not educated and I won't know what they are doing." She does not know whether the children passed or failed Term 1 because she does not understand the school reports.

Matheus Makuve, who has seven children at the school, visits school once a week to see how the teacher is teaching. He finished Grade 7 and helps his children in the subjects for which Afrikaans is the medium. He is unaware that Afrikaans is not the medium for any subject at the school.

Emilie Ngondo visits school twice a year to see how her child in Grade 2 is doing and how the teacher is teaching. She only watches what is happening at the school, she does not speak with anyone. Her child brings books home. Emilie does not know whether there is a School Committee or whether other parents visit the school.

Learners

Simfariana, who is in Grade 3, said that her parents visit the school to see how the teacher is teaching.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

Mr. Mutuku said that only once has a parent asked why his child failed. The Principal showed the parent the learner's work and results for the year, and "he must agree that the child failed."

The Grade 3 teacher, Mr. Sikongo, when asked whether a parent had ever disagreed with a pass/fail decision, said only that, "I am the teacher." He made it clear that he thought he was the only one who had input into the decision and that parents should not get involved. Mr. Sikongo did not answer the question of whether a parent had ever disagreed with him.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

The Grade 1 teacher, Ms. Serenyi, said that all learners are ready for Grade 1 because they all understand her.

Mr. Mutuku said there are no underage learners. Learners younger than 6 go to kindergarten.

Over the two days at the school, the research team saw many learners who were under age 6. When asked how old they were, three Grade 1 learners said they were 3, 3, and 5 years old.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Isangu, who is in Grade 1, takes books home and is helped by her brother, who is in Grade 4. She has not failed.

Markus, who is 13 years old and in Grade 1, takes books home and is helped by friends.

Kosmos, who is in Grade 2 and is 13 years old, studies at home with the help of his brother, who is in Grade 4.

Godfrid, who is in Grade 2, takes books home and studies with the help of his brother who is in Grade 6.

Simfariana, a Grade 3 learner who is 13 years old, takes her books home and reads. She shows her work to her mother, who went to school through Grade 6. She has never failed a grade.

Egidus, who is in Grade 3, studies at home on his own. Although there is no one who can help him at home, he says the teacher does not give him extra help but tells him, "Do it on your own, and don't come back until it is finished."

Attendance and Pass Rates

Mr. Sikongo said that learner absenteeism is not a problem. He did not say whether he meant that learners are not absent often, or that their being absent is nonproblematic.

Looking at the learner attendance records, in Grade 1 well over half the learners are usually absent each day; in Grade 2 10 to 15 out of 54 learners are absent daily; and in Grade 3 as few as 5 and as many as 20 out of 73 are absent daily. Few learners miss large amounts of school, but all learners miss some school. There is no discernible relationship between attendance and pass/fail.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

According to Mr. Attu, to pass Grade 2, in Rukwangali, a learner must be able to write his name and his mother's name, and write simple sentences such as "Teha ta vere." In English, learners must be able to read and write sentences like "Mary is ill." In Maths, learners must be able to count from 1 to 30 and do the four operations with those same numbers.

Mr. Sikongo, the Grade 3 teacher, said that in order to pass, in Rukwangali learners need to be able to read the alphabet and sentences like "Ame ta ni zikomukaro" ("I am going to the river"). In English, learners must be able to read and write sentences from the NAMPEP text. In Maths, they must be able to count from 1 to 100 and do the four operations with those numbers.

Teaching Methods

These comments are based on classroom observations and interviews.

Class observation: Grade 2 English

The teacher went quickly through lists of things in the classroom: chair, cupboard, pen, book, window, door. Learners were unable to repeat sentences after the teacher, but the teacher did not realize this during the choral repetition. The teacher said, "Now we are going to learn it again tomorrow," and wrote the list of words on the board. Learners were told to copy the words. The teacher did not look at learners' books, nor did he read through the words to see whether learners knew which word was which. One learner wrote "P" as "9." The teacher finished the lesson by saying, "Finished. Now you must take it and learn it."

Class observation: Grade 3 English

There were 53 learners present (out of 73 in the register). The teacher took out NAMPEP and shouted "on page 5!" Learners repeated. The teacher read words from the book, word by slow word. Learners repeated. Nearly every learner had his or her own book, but no more than 5 learners looked at their books when they repeated after the teacher.

The teacher copied sentences from "The Karitas Family" on the board. He made mistakes, such as "He like helping his mother." For "Mr." the teacher said "master" and wrote "Mnr." Learners repeated the page after the teacher again.

The teacher asked learners to read. One learner was able to read the whole page. She read easily. Later, we found out that this girl had done Grades 1 and 2 in Windhoek and just moved to this region. She told us, "This school is not good for me. The teachers do not know how to teach". No other learner was able to read.

The teacher asked questions such as, "Who is gets up?" and "Who work in the garage?' During the lesson, the teacher said, "Read on the cupboard" and at the end of the lesson, the teacher said to a learner, "Come and clean the cupboard." The learner dusted the blackboard.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Mr. Mutuku said that in Rundu last year he attended a workshop on continuous assessment. He was taught not to give exams in Grades 1 - 3 but to give a child marks from the beginning to the end of the year, to add total marks and put that number on the Exam Schedule.

Ms. Serenyi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that she has had some in-service training in which assessment was discussed, but she could not provide details of the training. Later, she said first that she had "never heard of continuous assessment," then said she uses CA in the classroom, having been told about it by the Principal. CA in Maths is written, and both written and oral in Rukwangali.

Mr. Attu, a Grade 2 teacher, said that the Principal gives teachers assessment guidance. Teachers give marks for all the things learners do in all subjects. At the end of a lesson, he asks questions. Mr. Attu added that he likes doing CA, and that it is "easy for me" and for learners, who forget what they learned at the beginning of the term by the end of that term.

Mr. Sikongo, the Grade 3 teacher, said that he heard of CA just this year. In CA the teacher gives a mark for everything learners do in class. If there are 3 periods of Rukwangali in a day, he gives a CA mark to all the learners. Before using CA, teachers used exams.

Exams Circulars

Mr. Mutuku said that NIED 3/94 (which he received recently) is very hard to understand. He said there was no guidance in the circular on how to get the final symbol for a learner in a particular subject.

Mr. Mutuku said that the Inspector delivers circulars and then leaves. The school needs someone to explain circulars and policies.

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, Textbooks and Learner Work

Ms. Serenyi does not have syllabi, but takes lessons from textbooks.

Mr. Attu has no syllabi except for NAMPEP guidance in English. For the other subjects, "we are just on our own." Teachers use textbooks for guidance.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence

Mr. Mutuku said that the Inspector has never given him advice on the numbers of learners who should pass or fail.

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction, Maths, and handwriting are promotion subjects; the Medium must be passed and one of the other two subjects may be failed.

Looking at NIED 3/94, Mr. Mutuku said that the promotion subjects for Grades 1 - 3 are:

Rukwangali, English, Maths and homework. [At the time, he was looking at the pages that list the promotion subjects as: Medium of Instruction, Maths, and handwriting].

Ms. Serenyi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that to be promoted learners must pass 6 subjects, but only listed 5: Maths, English, Rukwangali, Bible and handwriting.

Mr. Attu, the Grade 2 teacher, said that to pass Grade 2 learners must pass Rukwangali, Maths, and handwriting. If a learner passes these subjects and fails others, he may be promoted. Mr. Attu was nearly correct, with the exception that one of the two latter subjects may be failed, and the learner still will be promoted.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3
MEC policy at the time: Rukwangali, English, Maths and handwriting.

Mr. Sikongo listed the promotion subjects for Grade 3 as: English, Rukwangali and Maths, based on the information in the Exam Schedule.
Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Mutuku said that "F" is not failing, although according to MEC policy prior to NIED 3/94, F and FF are failing symbols. He did not know how to decide pass/fail. He said a teacher "just looks at the average." He could not explain how the teacher would get the average for any or all the subjects.

Ms. Serenyi said that F is a passing symbol, and that FF is failing, based on information from the Regional Office. Asked how she gets symbols from percentages, she could not answer.

Mr. Attu, the Grade 2 teacher, said that F is passing, as it was under the colonial system. He showed us a scale that said E is "below average," F is "weak," and FF is "very weak (fail)." In his class in Term 1 of 1994, 38 out of 46 learners (83%) were passed. Following MEC policy, only 18 out of 46 (39%) should have passed.

After realizing that the teachers at this school were unclear about how to get symbols, the research team gave them a list of symbols for three terms for three learners, and asked the teachers to determine the overall year-end symbol and pass/fail for each learner. The following four tables show the answers given by each teacher and a summary table:

THE GRADE 1 TEACHER:

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	D	P
Magdelena	C	C	D	E	F
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	F

THE GRADE 2 TEACHER

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	F	F
Magdelena	C	C	D	C	P
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	P

THE GRADE 3 TEACHER:

LEARNER	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	OVERALL SYMBOL	PASS OR FAIL
Ignatius	D	F	E	F	P
Magdelena	C	C	D	D	P
Petrus	D	E	FF	E	P

SUMMARY TABLE:

	OVERALL SYMBOL			PASS OR FAIL		
LEARNER	TEACHER 1	TEACHER 2	TEACHER 3	TEACHER 1	TEACHER 2	TEACHER 3
Ignat.	D	F	F	P	F	P
Magdel	E	C	D	F	P	P
Petrus	E	E	E	F	P	P

The high pass rate is a result of the teachers' belief that F is a passing symbol. Many of the learners who pass at this school pass with F's in the promotion subjects. If these symbols were corrected, the pass rates would be lower.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Within the school, the Principal and the teachers seem to have the same understandings of the lowest passing symbol (although they think it is F instead of E). The Principal has told the teachers what he was taught about CA and the teachers are implementing what they understand CA to be. The working relationship between the Principal and teachers seems healthy.

Between School and Community/parents

One of the days the research team was at the school, a group of parents came to complain about two learners quarreling with some parents down by the river during school time. The Principal asked the parents to call all the witnesses and organized a meeting of the School Board and parents to discuss the issue. The relationship between the Principal and the parents appeared to be friendly and respectful.

Between School and Regional Office

The Principal does not see the Inspector much and feels the need for more assistance than the school receives. On the first day of the research team's visit, the Principal asked whether he might ask us questions the next day. Before we left, he asked questions about the budget available to the school, and why schools in town have so many supplies and his school has almost nothing. He also asked for advice on how to handle the problem of learners drinking during school time. This Principal is hungry for help and has few people to ask for advice.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Correct the school's misconception of F as a passing Grade.

Provide practical training in CA.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 8

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	51%	58%	61%
2	51%	47%	67%
3	65%	55%	66%

This school has a consistently low pass rate, in spite of the fact that class sizes are small (28 to 50), and half the teachers in Grades 1 and 3 are trained. We sought to understand what beliefs and practices produced such low pass rates at this school.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Karawora	9 or less	2	15
Grade 1B	Mr. Kakuhu	9 or less		18
Grade 2B	Ms. Makena	9 or less	none	15
Grade 3B	Ms. Kapapu	9 or less	none	18

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is located near Rundu, and has about 300 learners total in Grades 1 - 4. There are 8 teachers. The medium of instruction is Rukwangali.

We arrived just before 8 in the morning and not many teachers or learners were at the school. The Principal was holding assembly and teachers and learners arrived over a twenty minute period. Rubbish is everywhere at the school. Although there are toilets for learners, learners urinated outside next to the buildings and teachers said nothing.

The Principal had received our letter. He spoke with us but did not seem enthusiastic to be doing so. We asked for Exams Schedules to use to decide which teacher in each grade to interview, but the Principal was reluctant to let us choose. After a few minutes, he admitted that one of the two Grade 1 teachers and one of the two Grade 3 teachers were absent, despite the fact that it was exams week. The learners from those two classes were outside or in the classrooms, making a lot of noise.

The Principal has been at the school for two years. He does not know when the school was built.

The Principal said that the teachers who were absent often stayed away from school when they knew someone from the outside such as the Inspector or our research team, was coming. The Principal said that he has terrible problems with the teachers, who are absent or drunk often. The two days the research team was at the school, two or three teachers were drunk. The Principal and one learner said that some days only two or three teachers come to school. The Principal added, "The children are suffering."

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and
Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

School staff are occupied with other matters they see as important and do not think much about failure. The Principal believes that sometimes teachers are responsible for failure. Other times, learners are at fault for laziness or absenteeism. Mr. Karawora said that teachers do not explain to learners or parents why learners fail.

A Grade 1 teacher, Mr. Kakuhu, said that his son failed Grade 3. Mr. Kakuhu does not know why his son failed. The teacher said that his son was afraid to answer questions, so maybe that is why he failed. The child also found reading and writing hard.

Parents

Claudia Ntemba's daughter failed Grade 1 "because she did not like school" and missed a lot of classes. Claudia forces her to go now, and now her daughter likes school.

Claudia added that in her daughter's class many learners pass because the teacher is good. [Note: Claudia's daughter is in the 3B class, which is taught by a teacher who seems to be the best teacher in the school].

Lucia Isoni, whose children are in Grades 1 and 2, said that one of her children failed Grade 1 last year. Lucia does not know why her daughter failed, but speculated "maybe she can't concentrate in class."

Vitolia Mashe said that children fail because teachers do not teach well. She heard this from learners and believes what they say because learners "know exactly what is happening at school."

Learners

Abraham (Grade 1) said the learners fail because they do not pay attention to the teacher. Abraham failed Grade 1 because he did not write an exam in one subject.

Ida, a Grade 1 learner, said that learners fail because they do not pay attention and they are "stupid." Ida failed Grade 1 once because she did not learn hard and failed Kwangali.

Angela, who is in Grade 2, said that learners fail because they do not learn. She can see that those learners who fail do not know what is happening in class. Angela has not failed a grade.

Moses, who is in Grade 2, said that learners repeat because "they just keep quiet" and do not answer questions in class. He said it was uncommon for learners to fail at this school [61 - 68% of the learners passed in 1993]. Moses failed Grade 2 once. He had not expected to fail.

Sebastiaan, a learner in Grade 3, said that learners fail because of absenteeism and not listening in class. He failed Grade 2 once because Maths was too difficult. The teacher "just wrote things on the board and did not explain, like 2 x 2."

Faustina, who is in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they do not study and they dodge classes often.

Placing Blame for Failure

Mr. Kakuhu (one of the teachers who was drunk both days the research team visited the school), said that failure is the responsibility of the learner himself. Mr. Kakuhu added that sometimes it is the fault of the teacher.

Parents

Claudia Ntemba said that when a learner fails fault goes "to both sides." A learner fails if he is not working hard or if the teacher is bad. Claudia added that some parents who don't care about school can also contribute to failure.

Lucia Isoni said that she does not know whether it is the teacher's or learner's fault when a learner fails. She has never heard of a teacher at this school not doing his or her job as it should be done.

Rita Simbo, who has a child in Grade 2, said that her son says the teacher is bad. The teacher is absent often. "Learners come to school but teachers are not bringing their side." Rita added that sometimes the Principal is the only teacher at school.

Learners

Abraham (Grade 1) did not place blame on teachers, but said that sometimes only the Principal is present at morning assembly. Teachers leave learners alone to go drink or come to school already drunk. Abraham's teacher sometimes hits learners when he is drunk.

Angela (Grade 2) said the it is the teacher's fault when learners fail because teachers do not teach well. The Grade 1 teacher is bad because he is absent and other teachers teach badly because "they drink too much." Angela added, "I want those teachers who are not teaching well, to let them go." Angela said that if she were the Principal, she would tell the teachers to stop drinking and if they did not, she would tell the Inspector, then chase them away.

Faustina (Grade 3) failed Grade 2 twice because she did not learn. She said she knew she would fail because she did not pay attention in class.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed
Those Who Pass Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

The Principal, Mr. Karawora, is not pleased with the pass rate at the school. Asked how many learners out of a class of 50 should pass, Mr. Karawora said that 40 (80%) would be good.

Ms. Makena, the Grade 2 teacher, expects maybe 30 or 40 out of 50 (60 to 80%) to pass this year. In Term 1, 29 learners passed. She said this number is not acceptable because only one or two should fail. To get more to pass, she said she should teach hard.

School Norms and Practices: failure and repetition

Mr. Karawora, although he is displeased with the pass rate, does not talk with his teachers about pass/fail.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Mr. Karawora said that it is not possible for all the learners in a class to pass because they do not have the same skills. Some are clever, some weak.

Mr. Kakuhu, the Grade 1 teacher, said it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because "some are naughty."

Ms. Makena, a Grade 2 teacher, said that it cannot happen that all the learners in a class pass because "some Grade 2's have to be taught like Grade 1's because they can't read or write."

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

The Principal said there is no School Committee because it is time to elect a new one. There are parents meetings only when it is time to elect a new School Board, every three years. In the past two years since he has been Principal at the school, he has tried to get parents involved in the school, but they refuse to help him do something about drunk teachers.

Mr. Karawora thinks parents believe education is important. Asked whether parents ever visit the school, the Principal said that they do not but that "I need it to happen so."

Ms. Makena, a Grade 2 teacher, said that parents care about education, but she did not explain why she believes this is so. She added that there is not a School Committee yet because the school needs to select one. Last year's Committee did not work hard.

Parents

The parents interviewed were either unaware of the school alcohol problem or felt unable to do anything about it.

Claudia Ntemba does not visit school and has not heard of parents meetings or a School Committee. Claudia said she thought the relationship between the Principal and teachers was good because she had not heard any bad things. She said that she would consider watching a class if she had time.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

The Principal said that he and the parents are "powerless to change the teachers' behaviour," because they have family in the community. The Principal added, "If [teachers] want to drink, they go to drink; if they want to go visit, they visit."

Ms. Makena, a Grade 2 teacher (who had been drinking before school on both days we visited), said that the Principal tries to get the community to do something about teachers drinking, but that nothing happens.

Parents

Claudia Ntemba said that she does not know whether the teachers at the school drink, but said that if they do, it is a bad thing. Lucia Isoni also does not know whether teachers drink.

Rita Simbo said that the Principal and parents have a good relationship because he is friendly and committed to the school.

Learners

Angela, a Grade 2 learner, said that her parents know the teachers drink but they do not mind that they drink.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mr. Kakuhu said that the Grade 1 learners who are only 4 or 5 years old are not ready for school. They are registered only if they are 5 years old, and the 4 year olds are allowed to sit in class.

Ms. Makena said that some Grade 2 learners are not ready because thy cannot write. She said that she does not know why they pass Grade 1, that those Grade 1 teachers "just give me the learners who pass."

Parents

Claudia Ntemba said that she thinks a child should start school by age 5. She used to send her 4-year-old daughter to school with her older sister but stopped because her younger daughter cried at school. Claudia said it is good to send young ones to school because they will learn to concentrate on school and be good learners.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Abraham, who is 10 years old and in Grade 1, has no books to take home.

Ida, who is 10 years old and in Grade 1, was not helped by her teacher after she failed Grade 1 last year. She was, however, helped by her sister. Ida takes books home.

Angela, who is 10 years old and in Grade 2, takes her books home and is helped by her mother, who is literate.

Parents

Claudia Ntemba said that her daughter (Grade 3) brings home books. Claudia looks at her homework and her daughter explains what she did in school that day.

Vitolia Mashe said that her grandson, who is in Grade 3, does not bring books home.

Rita Simbo said that her children bring home books and that she looks at their books although she cannot read and write (Rita went to school up to Grade 3).

Attendance and Pass Rates

None of the teachers discussed attendance and none shared their record books with us. Ms. Makena said her books had all been stolen and other teachers said their books were at home.

5. Quality of educational experience Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Teacher characteristics

Not all, but most of the teachers are drunk at school. These same teachers are absent frequently. The effects of these qualities are far-reaching: learners are well aware of their teachers' problems and some learners go so far as to blame their teachers for learners' failure.

Basic Competencies

The Grade 1 and 2 teachers we interviewed were not able to tell us much about what learners need to know to pass. What these teachers did talk about seemed incomplete and often inappropriate. The Grade 3 teacher did a better job of outlining basic competencies.

Mr. Kakuhu said that learners must be able to count from 1 to 50, nothing else. He was not able to give basic competencies in any other subjects.

The Grade 2 teacher said that in order to pass a learner must be able to read and write his name and a sentence like "Ame ta nili" to pass Kwangali; and add and divide numbers up to 50.

Ms. Kapapu, the Grade 3B teacher, said that in Kwangali and English learners must know the alphabet and be able to read and write sentences (she did not say what kind of sentences). In Maths learners must count and write the numbers 1 - 200, and be able to do the four operations with these numbers.

Teaching Methods
(comments based on classroom observations and interviews)

Grade 2B: English continuous assessment

In English assessment in Grade 2, the teacher put up sentences on the board (note: she had a stack of NAMPEP books in the cupboard, but did not use a book to guide her in writing these sentences):

"Look this chart:

Maria likes sweet, meat and dogs.
She does not likes snakes.

Otto likes meat.
She does not likes sweets, snakes, and dogs."

The teacher read through the sentences twice, with learners repeating after her. Then she had learners come up to the board individually to try to read the sentences. One girl out of about 30 learners got some of the words in the first sentence correct. The rest of the learners could not read any of the words.

In the interview, we asked the teacher whether the learners had done well in that CA. She said they got "just E's and F's because they didn't read good." The teacher said she was surprised they had done so poorly, but that they were used to repeating the same lesson more often than they had repeated that one. Asked whether they had seen all those words before, the teacher said that they had seen "Otto" and "Maria" and "meat" before, but that "snake and other words were strange to them." Asked if the learners can read in English, the teacher said "some can."

Quite apart from the fact that this teacher has problems with English, and did not use a book to guide her in making up sentences, she was testing the learners on material they had not learned. Further, it was clear that most of the learners in that class do not know how to read in their Home Language either (having observed another CA as well).

Grade 3B: Maths Exam

The teacher handed out pieces of paper to learners. She told them not to copy from another learner's paper because the answers might be wrong. Ms. Kapapu revised the meanings of the signs for addition and subtraction. Learners copied down the problems as the teacher read them (in Kwangali and the second time in Afrikaans):

Question 1:

9 - 3 =
10 - 6 =
14 - 9 =
13 - 13 =
15 - 5 =
9 - 9 =
10 - 0 =
14 - 5 =
13 - 2 =
15 - 9 =

Question 2:

9 - 3 =
10 - 6 =
14 - 9 =
13 - 13 =
15 - 5 =
9 - 9 =
10 - 0 =
14 - 5 =
13 - 2 =
15 - 9 =

The learners answered the questions and the teacher collected the pieces of paper. That was the only class work for the day. The teacher sat down to mark the tests and learners went outside.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment
Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Mr. Karawora said that one teacher at the school has not done CA all term and will have no information to use in assessment.

Mr. Kakuhu, a Grade 1 teacher, said he heard about CA from the Principal, who did a course on CA. Mr. Kakuhu does CA in English, Maths and Kwangali. He said he did CA last term, but has not done it this term [we visited in the next-to-last week of the term]. Mr. Kakuhu said he does oral and written assessments in CA and does them at the end of each term.

Ms. Makena, the 2B teacher, said she gives marks for everything she asks the learners. She was told to do assessment this way by the Principal. She said CA is useful to see whether a learner knows something. She was unable to answer how many times she does CA and how she gets marks for it.

Ms. Kapapu said that she was told by the Principal how to do CA. Ms. Kapapu assesses learners weekly in English and Kwangali.

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, and Learner Work

Ms. Makena said she has no syllabi and often her Scheme of Work is stolen. She could not say why anyone would want to steal her Scheme.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy at the time: Kwangali, Maths, and handwriting.

Mr. Kakuhu and Ms. Makena said that the promotion subjects for Grades 1 and 2 are English, Kwangali and Maths.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

Ms. Kapapu correctly listed the promotion subjects for Grade 3 as: Kwangali, English, Maths and handwriting.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Karawora, the Principal, said that the teachers who were absent during exam week "just guess" at the symbols for learners.

Grade 1

Mr. Kakuhu said that if a learner fails one or two of the promotion subjects he cannot pass the Grade. He said that the Inspector gave him this information. Mr. Kakuhu adds together the scores for all the subjects, and a passing percentage is "40 or 40-something" percent.

On his 1993 Exam Schedule, Mr. Kakuhu passed 12 out of 20 learners (60%), while only 10 should have passed (50%).

In the other Grade 1 class for Term 1 of 1994, 7 out of 21 learners (33%) were passed, whereas by MEC policy only 5 should have passed (24%).

Grade 2

Ms. Makena said she uses exams and CA to get symbols. She said that 35% is passing. When asked why a learner in her class had failed Term 1 of 1994 with the following symbols: E in Kwangali, E in English, F in Maths, and C in handwriting; Ms. Makena said that this learner failed because he failed three subjects. She listed as these subjects: Maths, Bible, Music and Physical Education [not realizing that she was listing 4 subjects]. Asked whether she determines pass/fail by the number of subjects failed, Ms. Makena did not answer.

In the 1993 Exam Schedule, Ms. Makena passed 12 out of 23 learners (52%). The Inspector corrected some of the mistakes and passed 15 learners (65%). Following MEC policy, 18 learners (65%) should have passed in 1993.

Grade 3

Ms. Kapapu said she gets marks from tests and symbols from marks. She said the Principal has a scale that tells what symbol is equal to what mark, such as 25% = E [under MEC policy, 25% is FF].

Condonation

The Principal said that the Inspector condones learners each year. The Inspector looks at Exam Schedules and checks them, then decides who should be promoted. The Principal said that sometimes condonation is not good.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Parents

Vitolia Mashe said that to improve the pass rate, teachers must be committed to their work and teach seriously; learners must work hard; and parents must be involved in the school.

Rita Simbo, whose children are in Grades 2 and 4, said that to increase the numbers of learners passing, learners must be encouraged to study and the school must get new teachers. The current teachers do not do their jobs properly.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Problems of every kind are severe in this school. The Principal complained about teachers not cooperating, coming drunk to school, and not caring about education. All these views were confirmed in the research team's experience at the school. For instance, when we asked to speak with Mr. Kakuhu, a Grade 1 teacher, on the second day after interviewing him also on the first day, he said, "Didn't you finish with me yesterday'?" and he complained that "You people just keep asking questions." It was clear that he was drunk and difficult to deal with.

Sebastiaan (Grade 3) said that the Principal and teachers do not cooperate because the teachers leave school to go drink. Rita Simbo, a mother, said that the relations between the teachers and Principal are bad. Teachers refuse to cooperate with the Principal. Rita said that only the Principal and the Grade 3B teacher are dedicated and the rest of the staff are drunkards.

Between School and Community/parents

The Principal feels that he and the parents are powerless to address school problems. He is at odds with the community in general because he sees it as supportive of the irresponsible teachers instead of supportive of him.

Between School and Regional Office

There are problems in the communication between the Inspector and Principal. The Principal has asked for help with drunk teachers, but the Inspector has done nothing. According to the Principal, the Inspector came to the Principals's house the day before and promised to come to school the day the research team was there, but the Inspector did not come.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 9

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	55%	73%	91%
2	62%	60%	93%
3	77%	88%	92%

This school has seen considerable improvement in the pass rates from year to year, particularly in Grade 1. We sought to understand what beliefs and practices produced the changes in pass rates at this school.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Hipondokwa	9	2	14
Grade 1	Mrs. Siyambi	11	ECP	5
Grade 2B	Mr. Likoro	10	none	1
Grade 3A	Mrs. Shivute	9	ECP	19
Grade 3B	Mrs. Mbambo	9 or less	none	16

1. School setting/atmosphere

This school is less than 50 kilometers from Rundu. The language of instruction is Kwangali. For about 300 learners, Grades 1 to 5, there are 9 teachers.

The Principal had not received the letter from the research team, and was frightened of us on our arrival and throughout our two days at the school. Even after the purpose of our visit and the promise of confidentiality were explained, Mr. Hipondokwa was suspicious of us. By contrast, his teachers were far less reluctant to speak with us.

When we arrived at the school, the sounds of choral repetition were loud from the classrooms.

The school uses one classroom as a staffroom (while the Grade 1 class meets under a tree). In the staffroom are a few tables and many orderly boxes of books. On the walls are posters and lists of rules for learners and staff, as follows:

School rules for learners:

1. The learners must respect the teachers.
2. Late children must be punished.
3. Fighting at school is forbidden.
4. Children absent from school 10 days must call their parents.
5. There must be putuality [sic], fairness, and honesty at school.
6. There must be neat dresses [sic] and cleanliness.
7. The learners must obey the rules.

School rules for teachers:

1. Liquor at school is not allow [sic].
2. Teachers do not live [sic] a schoolyard at break.
3. Teachers must be earlier at school than the learners.
4. There must be co-opperation [sic] between teachers and the principal.
5. Teachers absent from school without reason must to fill the leave forms.
6. Teachers must give a good examples [sic] for the learners.
7. The Principal must bid conduct between teachers and learners.

Later, the Principal said that the School Committee had written these school rules. The Principal denied that the school had problems with any of the behaviours dealt with in the rules for learners and staff.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail
Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and
Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Mr. Hipondokwa said that there has been no change in pass rates in his three years as Principal at the school. He said that most learners passed when he arrived and the same is true now. [Note that pass rates were as low as 55% when the Principal arrived in 1991, while the lowest pass rate in Grades 1 to 3 was 91% in 1993].

Mr. Likoro, a Grade 2 teacher, said that learners fail because they dodge classes and "do not cope" in class.

Mrs. Shivute, a Grade 3 teacher, said that with the introduction of CA, many learners pass now.

Mrs. Mbambo, the Grade 3B teacher, thinks that absenteeism is responsible for failure.

Parents

Linda Muronga's child failed Grade 1 but she does not know why. When her son passed the Grade the next year, no one helped him but he "learned for himself to pass."

Victoria Mukena's son failed a grade at the school. She does not know why he failed, but only said that she knew he had failed because when he got his report, "he was not singing and dancing like the other children."

Heinrich Mwala said that in general learners pass at this school. One of his children failed because he was looking after cattle. Heinrich realized that sending his son to look after cattle affected his results in school, so now Heinrich tends the cattle himself and sends his son to school.

Mr. and Mrs. Simbo do not know how many learners pass and fail at the school.

Rudolfina Nairenge said that learners fail because of dodging school, not listening to the teacher, hunger and illness, and problems at home such as the parents quarreling.

Learners

Learners list learner absenteeism and not studying as the reasons for failure. Johanna, who is 10 years old and in Grade 1 for the first time, said that learners fail because they do not listen in class.

Patrick, who is 7 years old and in Grade 1 for the first time, said that learners fail because of absenteeism. A learner also fails "if you are not clever." Patrick added that a teacher "will let you fail" if a learner does not listen.

Pontianus, who is 12 years old and in Grade 2 (having failed Grade 1 twice), said that he failed because he missed maybe 2 out of 5 days of school per week to look after his father's cattle. Now Pontianus comes every day and does not have to look after cattle anymore.

Elsie, who is 10 years old and in Grade 2 for the first time, said that learners fail because they do not study or dodge classes.

Christina, who is 10 years old and in Grade 3 (and who said she failed Grade 1 twice), said that she failed because she had to look after her father's cattle. She used to make it to school only one day a week, but now her father watches the cattle himself.

James, who is 15 years old and in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they cannot read and write and because they are absent.

Placing Blame for Failure

Mrs. Siyambi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that failure "can be the learner's responsibility because I give him something to do and he leaves it at home or doesn't do it."

Parents

Parents fault learners for failure. Linda Muronga blamed her son for failing Grade 1. She told him he did not learn hard, that he only played. Her son cried.

Victoria Mukena said that learners fail because they do not pay attention or because teachers teach badly. Teachers say that learners fail only when the do not listen in class or when they miss school.

Mr. and Mrs. Simbo said that the parents' role in education is to give the child enough food and clothes and to send the child to school, as well as to encourage the child in his work. When a child fails, he is responsible because "at school they teach him, so how can he fail?" When asked whether the teacher could be partly responsible for failure, Mr. Simbo said "We do not think about that. Some teachers try their best but the learners always fail."

Learners

Johanna, who is in Grade 1, said that parents tell children "it is up to them if they fail." She does not know any parents who blame teachers for failure.

Pontianus who is in Grade 2, said that when he failed his parents were quiet. He thinks they think he is bad because he failed, although they did not punish him.

Christina who is in Grade 3, said that the teacher did not help her when she failed Grade 1 twice. Christina added, "If the teacher had helped, I would have passed."

James, a learner in Grade 3, said that parents "think teachers are responsible [for failure] and come to teachers and ask." James said that this does not happen often.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed
Those Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mrs. Siyambi is not sure how many learners will pass this year because "it depends on how I will teach them." She added that many learners could improve and pass, so she could not guess how many would pass this year.

In 1993, 16 out of 19 learners passed in Mr. Likoro's class. Mr. Likoro said that 19 out of

23 learners passed Term 1 of this year [although the Exam Schedule shows he passed 17 learners]. He is satisfied with that number because the others do not do the work. He added, "That remains their problem."

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Perhaps due to the influence of the Inspector, the Principal and teachers believe it is possible for all the learners in a class to pass. Mr. Hipondokwa said that it is "important that all learners pass so that people will see that education is good at this school and that people learn well." He went on to say that last year the Inspector said that "he needs all children to pass."

Mrs. Siyambi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that it is possible for all the learners to pass a class, but it has not happened in her class yet.

Mrs. Shivute, a Grade 3 teacher, said that it is possible for all the learners in a class to pass to the next grade. She said that Terms 1 and 2 are difficult, but by Term 3, learners are ready to go on.

Mrs. Mbambo, a Grade 3 teacher, said that she has not yet experienced all the learners passing. She tries to get them to concentrate so that she can let them pass. No one has ever told her that all the learners should pass, but the Subject Advisor did say that learners should do things orally because writing is hard for them.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Hipondokwa complained that "parents don't care about education." Parents are uneducated and they do not tell their children to go to school because they do not know the importance of education. Parents do not feed the children properly. Parents do not come to meetings. Asked whether the parents we had invited would come to meet with the research team the following day, the Principal shook his head, laughed, and said "I don't know."

As it was, 5 out of 6 parents came to talk with us, and one learner's parents came from Angola, walking two or three hours to reach the school. Based on the conversations the team had with parents, the level of interest in the school seems far higher than the Principal estimates it to be.

Mrs. Siyambi said that parents have no interest in education compared with other schools where parents visit all the time to see how their children are doing in school. The school invites parents but they do not come.

Parents

Linda Muronga has come to the school twice for parents meetings. She has never visited on her own and would not think of watching lessons because she has never been invited to do so.

Victoria Mukena visits school on her own to talk to teachers and see what they teach. She said that the Grade 1 teacher is good. Victoria said that parental involvement depends on the parent but she likes to come. Victoria never went to school.

Mr. and Mrs. Simbo, who live in Angola, said they have never been invited to parents meetings.

Heinrich Mwala visits school sometimes to meet with the teacher to see how his children are doing. He has not watched lessons, but has stood at the door of the class to listen. He said that there is no School Committee but that the Principal called parents to discuss inadequate resources and the construction of a new building.

Rudolfina Nairenge has visited the school twice this year to ask the Grade 1 and 2 teachers how her children are doing. She has observed two lessons this year and found them good. Her children are doing well in school. She added that few parents come to school even though they are invited by the Principal.

Relationships with Principal and Teachers

The Principal said the school sends reports home with learners in August and December. The reports tell whether the learner passed or failed and whether the learner's behaviour is good or bad. The report may say that the learner failed because he or she does not pay attention or is naughty.

Parents

Linda Muronga said she gets school reports at the end of the year.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mrs. Siyambi said that some learners are not ready for Grade 1 because they are only 5 years old. This year she has two learners who are underage. Underage learners are not registered, but neither are they sent home. Mrs. Siyambi added that when a learner comes to school, he should know how to do "something with his own hand, like draw a circle or a tree," and that learners should learn these things at home.

Mr. Likoro, the Grade 2 teacher, said that some learners are not ready for Grade 2. "You will teach the class, give them five words to read, and when the whole class can read them on their own, he cannot." This situation shows the learner is not ready.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Johanna (Grade 1) takes exercise books home and studies at home. Her older sister helps her with Maths.

Patrick, also in Grade 1, takes home his exercise books. His mother helps him with writing when he has problems. She taught him how to write his name and the school name.

Pontianus, who is in Grade 2, does not have any books or exercise books to take home. His brother, who is in Grade 3, helps Pontianus with reading.

Elsie, a learner in Grade 2, takes books home and studies with her brother who is in Grade 4. She does not always study because sometimes she has work to do at home.

Christina, who is in Grade 3, does not take books home and has no one to help her at home.

James, a learner in Grade 3, takes books home and studies without help at home.

Quality of Teaching and School

All of the interviewees consider this school to be a good one. The Principal was praised by parents and learners think their teachers are good.

Attendance and Pass Rates

Despite the fact that most interviewees list absenteeism as a factor in failure, judging from attendance and assessment records, there does not seem to be a relationship between low attendance and failure. Out of four Grade 1 learners (two girls and two boys) who were absent over half the days in Term 1, one boy and one girl passed and one girl and one boy failed the term. In general, about 10 out of 39 (26%) of the learners are absent on any given day.

Out of three Grade 2B learners who missed over half the days in Term 1, two passed and one failed. Daily, about 9 out of 23 learners (39%) are absent.

In Grade 3A, one learner passed Term 1 after missing 37 days of school. On average 11 out of 39 (28%) of the learners are absent each day. In Grade 3B, where 13 out of 36 (36%) of the learners are absent on any given day, one out of two learners who missed over half the days in Term 1 passed the term.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Teacher cooperation

The Principal said that teachers work together well and discuss what learners should know in each grade. Mrs. Mbambo, the Grade 3B teacher, said that before school opens each term the Principal and teachers discuss learner and teacher problems, including pass/fail. When failure is high the school calls parents to show them why learners are failing.

Mrs. Siyambi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that teachers discuss how to put marks together to get an average. She talks with the Grade 2 teachers about what learners need to know at the beginning of Grade 2. The Grade 2 teachers do not say learners who pass Grade 1 are not ready for Grade 2.

Basic Competencies

Mrs. Siyambi said that learners must be able to do the following to pass Grade 1: add and subtract numbers up to 5 and count from 1 to 10; read and write family members' names, say poems, and read and write sentences such as "Nane tatara tate" ("Mother is looking at father") in Kwangali; and in English read and write sentences from *Our Own Reader*, such as "Mother cooks food" and "Timo eats meat."

Mr. Likoro said that to pass Grade 2 learners must know Kwangali and English words that the teacher takes from a dictionary. Mr. Likoro was not able to say more about basic competencies.

Mrs. Shivute said that in order to pass Grade 3, learners must be able to read and write their names and words like "father" and "mother" in English; read and write the names of family members in Kwangali; and do the four operations with numbers up to 50 in Maths. Mrs. Shivute had a hard time answering this question about what learners must be able to do to pass Grade 3.

Learners

Christina, who failed Grade 1 twice, does not expect to pass Grade 3 this year even though she passed Term 1. She said "Grade 3 is too hard for me." She was unable to answer what 2 x 13 is, or 3 x 6. That day in class, the teacher had done long division. Christina had no idea how to do 56 divided by 4.

Teaching Methods

These comments are based on classroom observations and interviews.

Grade 1: handwriting lesson

Class meets under a tree. Learners sit on concrete blocks in the sand and have no hard surface to write on. Most learners hold their exercise books on their laps as they work. During another lesson that day class was disrupted when the learners killed a snake that was coming toward them.

Mrs. Siyambi wrote "J J J J J" on the board, unevenly, without lines drawn in. She left to get pencils. Learners were given their exercise books and told to copy the letters. The teacher did not discuss how to make the letter "J," but she did go around to look at the exercise books of perhaps 10 learners (out of 39 in the class). One boy had written "J" backwards. The teacher told him how to correct it. For about 15 minutes the teacher left the class to work alone. The learners sang softly and talked most of that time. There was no check of learner books at the end of the lesson. The teacher went directly into Maths.

Grade 2B: English lesson

Mr. Likoro came into class five minutes late. Without a word, he wrote on the board:

> The days of the week
>
> Sunday
> Monday
> Tuesday
> Wednesday
> Thursday
> Friday

In a very loud voice, Mr. Likoro said, "The days of the week." There were 38 learners in the class that day because the other Grade 2 teacher was absent and Mr. Likoro had both classes together. The learners, at a deafening volume, repeated after him. The teacher said each day and learners repeated, saying "Sursday" for "Thursday." The teacher did not notice the mistake. The teacher and the learners realized at the same time that the teacher had forgotten to write "Saturday" on the board. He stopped and wrote "Saterday" [sic].

The teacher went through the days, "Sunday is the first day of the week," and so on. Learners repeated all together. Then the teacher said "boys only," and then "girls only." Throughout the lesson, Mr. Likoro hit the desk with a stick as he spoke. For half an hour, learners repeated as a group. Not once did an individual learner read by himself or herself. As the learners repeated after the teacher, few of them looked at the board. Using this method of teaching, Mr. Likoro did not find out whether any of the learners can read.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Mr. Hipondokwa said that CA is done in the place of exams. In 1993 a Subject Advisor came to the school to show the Principal and teachers how to do CA. Mr. Hipondokwa said CA is oral. He did not know how to define CA, nor what its purpose might be.

Mrs. Shivute, the Grade 3A teacher, had some training in assessment during teacher training from 1974 to 1975. More recently, she was told by the Subject Advisor about CA. CA is done orally in class. The learners write a kind of test in Maths also.

Mrs. Siyambi, who teachers Grade 1, said that she was taught by the Inspector how to do assessment. There are no exams in Grades 1 and 2, only CA. Every 2 days, she takes down marks.

Mr. Likoro, a Grade 2 teacher, said that the Inspector told the Head of Department (HOD) about CA. The teacher told the other teachers about CA, but could not answer questions the teachers had about how to do CA. The HOD did not have complete information and the teachers are unsure how to do CA.

Mr. Likoro said he does not give tests, but only asks learners to answer questions orally.

Mrs. Mbambo said that sometimes the Grade 4 teacher says learners passing Grade 3 are not ready for Grade 4 because they do no writing in the lower grades and in Grade 4 there is lots of writing. Mrs. Mbambo added, "Maybe a learner in Grade 4 can't write his name." Mrs. Mbambo does have learners write in Kwangali, but they are also assessed orally in CA.

Mrs. Shivute said of learners, "They are not learning hard, just passing because of oral assessment." She thinks CA is not a good system because learners have it easy and are no more clever than learners in the past who failed. Learners do not know how to read. They listen to others read, they repeat, and do not understand.

Exams Circulars

Mr. Hipondokwa showed us NIED 42/93, and said that is the circular the school uses for guidance in promotion decisions. Mr. Hipondokwa said that the circular is hard to understand on the first reading, but now he understands it. Earlier, looking at the Exam Schedule, the Principal had said that the promotion subjects were the Home language, English and Maths for Grade 1 [which is incorrect -- English is not a promotion subject, and handwriting is]. We asked whether he wanted to discuss NIED 42/93, and he said no, that everything was clear.

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, and Learner Work

Schemes of work are old and have not been revised to reflect CA. For instance, each Scheme has the last 3 to 5 weeks set aside for revision and evaluation. In Grade 2B, the whole of Term 3 is revision and evaluation.

Teachers have trouble with English, particularly the Grade 2B teacher. In his Scheme, he listed as a sentence to practice the letter "I" in handwriting: "Ina and Isak is ill." This sentence was copied by learners into their exercise books.

In Grade 3 in 1993 the teacher used *Our Own Reader*, but in 1994, she uses NAMPEP materials. In a learner's exercise book lesson in English grammar, the 3A teacher marked as correct: "I am look at him. I am closing the it. I am asking the her." In general, the teachers mark books regularly and mark as correct the answers that are right.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Inspector's Influence and Condonation

When asked who decides to condone learners, as in the 1993 Exam Schedule when 2 out of 33 learners were condoned, Mr. Hipondokwa said that the Inspector decides condonation. [These two learners should have passed under normal circumstances, using MEC policy at the time, and should not have needed to be condoned].

Mrs. Siyambi, the Grade 1 teacher, said that the Inspector had not told her anything about how many learners should pass or fail. She disagreed with the Inspector's decision to condone two learners last year because the learners were weak. She said these two learners are having problems in Grade 2 this year.

Mrs. Shivute, a Grade 3 teacher, said that it is hard to handle the learners "pushed" to the next grade by the Inspector, but condonation is uncommon. Mrs. Shivute said that the Inspector "told us that learners from Grades 1 to 3 cannot fail under CA."

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
[Promotion subjects under MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction; Maths; and Handwriting].

As discussed under "Exams Circulars" above, the Principal was mistaken about the promotion subjects. All of the teachers in Grades 1 and 3 were not up-to-date on what the promotion subjects are. Mrs. Siyambi, the Grade 1 teacher, listed Kwangali, English, handwriting and Maths as promotion subjects. Mr. Likoro correctly said that the promotion subjects are Maths, handwriting and Kwangali.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

[Promotion subjects under MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction; Maths; English; and Handwriting].

Mrs. Mbambo, a Grade 3 teacher, said that the promotion subjects are English, Maths and Kwangali. Mrs. Shivute, the other Grade 3 teacher, listed the same promotion subjects as her colleague.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

All the teachers use totals instead of individual subjects to decide pass/fail. They also use the following maximum marks: 100 marks for English, Kwangali, and Maths; and 20 marks for other subjects, which include handwriting, environment, and religion [the Grade 3 teachers include health].

Grade 1

Mrs. Siyambi said that learners must have 40% overall to pass the year. Which subjects are failed is not important. In 1993, Mrs. Siyambi passed 29 out of 33 learners (88%), while by MEC policy, 30 should have passed (91%). In Term 1 of 1994, she passed 32 out of 37 learners (86%). By MEC policy, the same number of learners should have passed, but one of the learners passed by Mrs. Siyambi should have failed, and one of the learners she failed should have passed. Mrs. Siyambi correctly determined the overall percentage for each learner from the total, but she was incorrect in the determination of the minimum pass mark for several subjects: she had 34/100 as the minimum for Maths and 10/20 as the minimum for handwriting.

Grade 2

Mr. Likoro said that symbols come from tests and that pass/fail depends on the total marks. As a minimum pass mark, Mr. Likoro had 144 out of 360 (which is 40%), using the same combination of marks as the Grade 3 teachers, but he failed learners with overall percentages as high as 54%. Following MEC policy, 22 out of 23 learners (96%) should have passed Term 1 of 1994, while Mr. Likoro passed only 17 out of 23 learners (74%).

Grade 3

Mrs. Mbambo said that English, Maths and Kwangali are the most important subjects, but that the other subjects are included in the pass/fail decision. She said she adds the non-promotion subjects to the total only when a learner did not do well in the promotion subjects.

Then she said that if a learner fails one subject, he fails Grade 3.

Mrs. Mbambo's description of how she decides pass/fail is not in keeping with her CA records (which are transferred to Exams Schedules and used to decide promotion at the end of the year). English, Kwangali and Maths have a maximum of 100 (no minimum is listed for any individual subject); and Bible, Health, Environment, and Handwriting are worth 20 marks each; for a total of 380 marks. Mrs. Mbambo adds up the learner's total marks and passes those with an overall percentage of 40% or higher.

At the end of 1993, Mrs. Mbambo passed 22 out of 23 learners (96%). Following MEC policy, only 21 learners (91%) should have passed. In Term 1 of 1994, Mrs. Mbambo passed 34 out of 40 learners (85%), when under MEC policy only 29 learners (73%) should have passed.

Mrs. Shivute said that assessment is based on CA; there are no exams. She looks at the total marks of a learner to decide pass/fail. If a learner fails terms 1 and 2, but passes Term 3, he passes the year. Mrs. Shivute uses the same system to determine pass/fail as does Mrs. Mbambo. All 26 learners in Mrs. Shivute's class passed in 1993 and 40 the learners passed in Term 1 of 1994. Following MEC policy, no changes should be made in the numbers passing and failing. However, it is worth noting that in Kwangali the lowest symbol given a learner in 1993 was a C and in Term 1 of 1994 the lowest symbol given a learner was a D. In English in 1993, the lowest symbol given a learner was a D, and most learners got C's. In Term 1 of 1994, no learners failed English. Out of 26 learners in 1993, for Kwangali, English, Maths, handwriting, environment, religion, arts, music and physical education, not a single learner failed a single subject.

The teachers' contention that it is easier for learners to pass using CA (as these teachers understand it), is supported by these results. The learners at this school did not seem to be better-educated than their peers at other schools. Instead, at this school learners are expected to meet a different set of standards.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Mr. Likoro, a Grade 2 teacher, said that to raise the numbers of learners passing, parents must get involved in motivating children and resources must be increased.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Communication between the staff at school is good compared with situations at other schools. The Principal and teachers meet to discuss school problems and to a certain degree, to standardise ways of assessing learners. The similarities in the CA record books are evidence of this collaboration. Some of the teachers set work together and advise one another in teaching methods.

Between School and Community/parents

While communication and cooperation between the school and the parents is far better at this school than at several other schools visited, there are significant gaps in communication. Parents, including those who visit regularly, are not often invited to the school. The Principal and teachers do not think the parents are very interested in school, while the interviews the research team had with parents suggest otherwise.

Between School and Regional Office

The school is visited not infrequently by the Inspector and/or Subject Advisor, who have stayed long enough on several occasions to teach the staff something about CA.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Be sure the school staff use individual subjects and not totals to decide pass/fail.

Clarify whether CA is to be done orally or whether there are written components.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 10

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	57%	39%	100%
2	36%	68%	100%
3	47%	76%	82%

This school has erratic pass rates in all three Grades. We sought to understand what beliefs and practices resulted in these pass rates at the school.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Mudi	15	3	
HOD	Mr. Kanyanga	9	none	17
Grade 1	Mr. Moyo	9 or less	none	17
Grade 2	Mr. Kagawo	9 or less	none	13
Grade 3	Mr. Ngonde	12	NPTP	

1. School setting/atmosphere

The school is located near Rundu. The medium of instruction is Rukwangali. There are 12 teachers for about 350 learners in Grades 1 to 6.

The staffroom is well-organized and has a table for each teacher. On the walls there are posters, timetables, and photographs of learners from the last couple of years.

A Regional Office official said that the school used to have a terrible Principal but now had a very good one who was new this year. In writing to the Principal, the research team did not know that there was a change of Principal, so our letter was addressed to the former Principal, who had been demoted to HOD at the school.

When we arrived at the school, we met the new Principal, Mr. Mudi, who welcomed us. He later explained that the letter announcing our visit had arrived the day before and that the HOD had become hopeful that he was being reinstated as Principal, since the letter was on official Ministry letterhead. We apologised to Mr. Mudi for the mistake and he was gracious.

Having the former Principal, who is supported and well-liked by the community, remain at the school is a burden to the new Principal. The teachers in the higher grades support the new Principal, Mr. Mudi, but those in the lower grades side with Mr. Kanyanga. This division affects the way the school is run, and limits the changes Mr. Mudi can introduce.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Mr. Mudi said that learners who are absent a lot tend to fail. Although this is his first year at the school, Mr. Mudi said that he thinks that in the past, the reason for great changes in the pass rate was "ineffective control" on the part of the former Principal. Mr. Mudi expects that situation to change, with many learners passing consistently, though he said that he has not looked as carefully as he should at the promotion policies of the teachers in Grades 1 and 2. [In Term 1 of 1994, the Grade 1 teacher did not fill in pass/fail, but according to MEC policy, 73% of the learners passed. The Grade 2 teacher passed 96% of the learners. The Grade 3 teacher, using the wrong method, passed 76% of the learners when only 44% should have passed].

Mr. Kanyanga, the HOD and former Principal, had no explanation for the erratic pass rates of the last few years. He simply said that some learners need two years in a grade. He did not explain how one year 39% of the Grade 1's might pass and 100% the next year.

Mr. Ngonde, the Grade 3 teacher, said that pass rates change year to year depending on class size. [According to the data on the school, this statement is not true]. Mr. Ngonde continued, saying that his first year at the school he had 80 learners and 35 passed (44%), which was to him "a big number" to have pass in an overcrowded class.

Parents

Ester Kamenye has a child doing Grade 3 for the third time. She said he failed because he refuses to come to school and instead goes to stay with his Grandmother.

Learners

Among learners, absenteeism is the most frequently mentioned reason for failure. Andreas, who is repeating Grade 1, said that learners fail because of absenteeism. They also fail if a teacher is not teaching.

Roswita, who is repeating Grade 1, said that learners fail because they are naughty, they do not concentrate in class, and they dodge classes.

Rosa, who is repeating Grade 2, said that learners fail because of absenteeism and because they do not know how to read.

Mathilde, who is in Grade 2, said that learners fail because they dodge classes.

Subrentia, who is in Grade 3, said that learners fail because of illness or absenteeism.

Pauline, who failed Grade 3 last year because she was sick during exams, said that learners fail because they do not pay attention.

Placing Blame for Failure

Mr. Kanyanga, the HOD and former Principal, said that when all the learners pass it is because the teacher is good. When few learners pass, it means that the teacher comes to school but the learners dodge classes.

Parents

Alfonsine Mwingi said that teachers are not to blame for failure because they are doing their job. She knows they are doing their job because children can read and write. Neither are parents to blame because they encourage children to attend school.

Learners

At this school both learners and teachers are faulted for failure. Andreas (Grade 1), said his parents fault the teachers for not teaching well.

Roswita, who is in Grade 1, said that parents credit learners with failure. Parents tell their children to stop being naughty and sometimes punish them by not feeding them. Roswita also said that parents think teachers are responsible although failure is mainly the child's fault.

Rosa, a learner in Grade 2, said that parents blame learners for not studying and do not think failure is the teacher's fault. Mathilde agrees with her parents.

Mathilde, who is in Grade 2 and who failed a grade, said "If you are not taught, then you must expect to fail." She added that some parents blame their children and tell them to work harder. Other parents say that "it is teachers who are failing our children." Mathilde said that it is uncommon for parents to hold teachers responsible for failure.

Subrentia, who is in Grade 3, said that parents blame the teachers for failure because the do not teach well.

Pauline, a learner in Grade 3, was disappointed not to be promoted last year. She said that the teacher should have promoted her "because I can read and write."

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/should Be Changed
Those Who Pass Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mr. Moyo expects 30 out of 64 Grade 1 learners (47%) to pass this year. Mr. Kagawo expects 25 out of 46 learners (54%) to pass Grade 2 this year. Asked whether he thought all those learners should have passed Grade 1 last year, he said, "I don't know the method that teacher used to pass them." The Grade 1 and 2 expected pass rates are considerably below the pass rates of last year, which would be quite consistent with the erratic pattern of pass rates across the years.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Mr. Mudi said that an Inspector told him that it is impossible that Grade 1 and 2 learners should fail under CA because learners are assessed on whatever they are doing. The teacher should try to be sure all the learners pass. Then Mr. Mudi said that in his own opinion, it is impossible for all the learners in a class to pass because individuals differ. Even if the teacher is excellent, some "behind" learners cannot "cope up" quickly. No matter how interesting the teaching is or the group work is, there are slow learners.

The teachers in Grades 1 to 3 are not well-informed about how learners are doing in other grades. For example, these teachers do not think about why it is that the class of learners that passed at a rate of 100% in Grade 1, is not doing well in Grade 2.

Mr. Kanyanga, in sharp contrast to Mr. Mudi, said that "Of course it is possible for all learners to pass," as it has happened at the school.

Mr. Moyo, the Grade 1 teacher, said that it has happened that all the learners in a class pass. In fact, it happened last year in Grade 1. His explanation for the change in pass rates over the years was that some years learners are ready for school and other years they are not. Asked how the class that passed last year is doing in Grade 2, Mr. Moyo said they are doing "better." [Note: 73% of these learners passed Term 1 in Grade 2]. The Grade 2 teacher, Mr. Kagawo, however, said that the Grade 2 class he has this year is not as good as last year's class.

Mr. Ngonde, the Grade 3 teacher, said that it would be "difficult" for all the learners to pass because not all learners "have their eyes and minds open." He added that having a whole class pass has never happened at this school. Of course, it has happened at the school, with all the Grade 1 and 2 learners passing in 1993. [Note: only 44% of the class in which all the learners passed Grade 2 in 1993, passed Term 1 in Grade 3].

Parents

Ester Kamenye said that she has heard about all the learners in a class passing, but that she has also heard of them all failing. The HOD, Mr. Kanyanga is a poor teacher and once he lost all the test books, so he told the whole class that they failed. [This contention is not supported by the school's pass rates for any grade, though the HOD's incompetence is clear in other areas].

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Mudi tried to have a parents meeting during Term 1 of this year. Only 3 parents turned up for the meeting, despite the fact that it was announced in advance by radio and in church. Mr. Mudi interprets this lack of interest as a reflection of community discontent over his becoming Principal. Another reason for parents' disinterest is the politics of the education system of the past. The parents were never called in to school. So now parents say, "Why should we be called? Children are in the hands of the teachers, so the teachers must deal with education and discipline."

While the research team asked for 6 parents to come to the school, only 2 parents came. One father sent his apologies for not being able to attend. It is uncertain whether the Grade 1 and 2 teachers actually invited the parents of learners in their classes, as they seemed very reluctant to help us. Considering the relationship the school has with parents, it is possible that the other three parents were invited but simply decided not to come.

Parents

The two parents interviewed support the Principal's statement that parents do not have much interest in school. Ester Kamenye said that she goes to parents meetings at another school that her children attend, but has never come to one at this school.

Alfonsine Mwingi said that she has not visited the school and does not want to. She explained, "It is important to encourage the children to attend school daily and to study hard, rather than come to the school." She has not seen or heard of parents visiting the school. Alfonsine thinks other parents do not have much interest in the school. Some parents who represent all the parents do come to school.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mr. Moyo, the Grade 1 teacher, said that some learners are not ready for Grade 1. They come to school "when they can't even write." Mr. Moyo thinks children should start school at age 7, after they have learned to take care of themselves and count from 1 to 10 and write some numbers. He said few children who start Grade 1 can do these things but that they should learn these things at home. Asked whether the parents of the learners can read and write, Mr. Moyo said they cannot. He did not realize that what he was asking of learners was unreasonable.

Mr. Kagawo, the Grade 2 teacher, has a 6-year-old child in Grade 3. His son started school at age 4 along with his brother. Mr. Kagawo said that his younger son had some problems with Maths but is doing better now. He does not know whether there are many other learners who are that young and he clearly does not think there is a problem with having children start school very young.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Andreas and Roswita, both of whom are in Grade 1, do not take books home because they are not allowed to. No one helps Andreas at home, but Roswita is helped by her uncle sometimes.

Rosa, who is in Grade 2, takes her exercise books home. She wishes she could take her text books home because they are much more useful than exercise books because they have lots of information. "Exercise books only have things we copy from the board, written by the teacher."

Mathilde, who is in Grade 2, said that she takes books home and studies on her own. If she has problems she asks the teacher for help the next day.

Subrentia and Pauline, learners in Grade 3, take exercise books home and are helped by their siblings.

Quality of Teaching and School

Roswita has noticed a change in the school since Mr. Mudi became Principal. She said he is very positive and good.

Attendance and Pass Rates

In Grade 1 roughly 10 out of 60 learners 17%) are absent daily. In Grade 2, 17 out of 48 learners (35%) are absent daily. Some learners are absent for whole weeks. In Grade 3, some days nearly all of the 53 learners are absent. Most other days a quarter of the class is absent. Teachers did not provide us CA books for 1994, so we were unable to see whether there is a strong relationship between pass/fail and attendance.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

The Principal said that when he compares learners' achievement at his school with other schools, learners at his school do not know as much. At other primary schools, learners can write their names and some letters in Grade 1. "Here," he said, "they don't write anything." The teachers get their idea of basic competencies from experience.

Mr. Moyo, the Grade 1 teacher, said that in order to pass Grade 1, a learner has to know Molteno words such as "Mother is drinking tea" in Kwangali, and words from *Our Own Reader* in English.

Mr. Kagawo said that in order to pass Grade 2 a learner has to know words like: book, chair, pen, father, mother, and simple sentences in both languages. He was unable to say what learners must do in Maths to pass.

Teaching Methods
These comments are based on classroom observations.

Class observation: Grade 1

Mr. Moyo is being trained as a Molteno teacher. The lesson was supposed to be English, but the teacher did some combination of Kwangali and Maths. There were four tables of learners, with 12 to 15 learners in each group. Mr. Moyo took one group at a time to the front of the class to teach them while the other learners were busy with drawings at their tables.

The Maths lesson was addition of numbers under 10. The teacher wrote a problem on the board and learners shouted answers. Mr. Moyo then called on learners to come to the board and write the correct answers. About half the time learners got the answers correct. When learners were wrong, Mr. Moyo often rubbed out the answer, told them to sit down, and wrote the correct answer himself. He did not explain how he got the answers.

While the first group of learners was with the teacher, the other groups were to be drawing pictures from posters given them. The posters had consonant combinations, such as "ng" in the word "singa," and had a complicated picture of a boy with oxen and a cart. Learners were told to copy the word and the picture. None of the learners copied the word and most tried to do the picture, but it was too difficult. When the teacher brought another group to the front, he made all the other groups rotate to another table. These learners then sat down with another word and another piece of paper that some other learner had been working on. There was no continuity in either lesson.

The lesson went well beyond the half hour intended, so the research team members left.

Mr. Mudi said that Mr. Moyo and the Grade 2 teacher, Mr. Kagawo, were not doing what they had been taught to do in Molteno workshops. The Molteno advisors had been to the school several times and found that the teachers are not doing their jobs very well. Our observation of this lesson supports that view.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment
Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

The Principal, Mr. Mudi, said that the school uses CA, which he defined as assessing every activity. If a learner is unable to answer, the teacher should write that down. Mr. Mudi said that the teachers do not have CA marks for Term 2 because they wait until the end of the term to do it. That is not the way it should be done, he added. The Grade 1 and 2 teachers say that they lack stationery to record CA marks, so they do not do CA. Mr. Mudi said, "Honestly speaking I don't have much confidence in the process of assessment" in Grades 1 and 2. He continued, "I hope the marks are somewhat accurate," though he went on to say that the marks seemed high for the achievement level of the learners.

Mr. Moyo, the Grade 1 teacher, said that he uses CA in promotion decisions, but that "exams are most important."

Mr. Kagawo, the Grade 2 teacher, said that CA is giving marks for questions asked in class from the beginning to the end of the year. When asked whether he had CA marks for Term 2, Mr. Kagawo said he did. When asked to show them to us, he said that he did not have any marks yet, but would start collecting them tomorrow. Mr. Kagawo said that marks come not from CA but from exams. CA is used only when a learner misses exams because of illness.

Mr. Ngonde has had no training in assessment. At the school, each teacher decides how to do assessment. Mr. Ngonde said that he does not give exams, but does only CA all year. Later he added that marks come from tests throughout the year. He described these tests as oral questions about recent lessons that he asks learners in class.

Exams Circulars

Mr. Mudi said that he uses NIED 42/93 as a guide for promotion. The Principal said that the teachers are supposed to know MEC policy on promotion but that they may not. He said, "I took for granted that everyone understood, and was careful not to make so many changes as if they do not know what they are doing. I handle it as if they do know while I am observing."

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, and Learner Work

While the Grade 1 and 2 teachers comply with the Principal's insistence that they fill out Daily Preparation books, the teachers do not put much information in them. There are categories for subject, teaching aids (usually "blackboard"), and method of teaching. Seven days in a row, the Grade 1 teacher listed "the family repeat again" for the English oral lesson.

The preparation book of the Grade 3 teacher includes lessons such as: "We go to doing oral work. About the following. Stand up! What are you doing? I am standing up."

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Competence and Trust

Mr. Mudi said that the Grade 1 and 2 teachers are not competent: they do not understand the syllabus and "they don't actually cope." Their English is poor, they use poor teaching methodology, and although they say that "We are trying our level best," they go to upgrading workshops but return to their old ways of teaching. Mr. Mudi would like to see these teachers replaced.

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy at the time: Kwangali (oral and reading); Maths and handwriting.

Mr. Kanyanga, the HOD and former Principal, listed as promotion subject for Grades 1 to 3: English, Kwangali and Maths. He said he got this information from an MEC circular.

Mr. Moyo said that the promotion subjects for Grade 1 are Maths, Kwangali (reading and writing), English (reading, writing, oral), and handwriting.

Mr. Kagawo said that the promotion subjects for Grade 2 are English and Kwangali (oral, reading and writing for both languages), and Maths.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

Mr. Ngonde correctly listed the promotion subjects as English, Kwangali, Maths and handwriting.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Kanyanga, the HOD, said that a learner must have 45% in total marks (not individual subjects) to pass.

Grade 1

Mr. Moyo said that he adds all the marks together and looks at the total to decide pass/fail. A learner must have 40% to pass. A learner can fail one non-promotion subject and still pass. Mr. Moyo said that the teachers must be doing the school's Exam Schedules correctly or else they would be corrected by the Inspector, who controls them.

Grade 2

Mr. Kagawo said that a learner must have 40% overall in order to pass. He said that the Principal decides whether a learner can fail any of the subjects and be promoted. [This claim is not consistent with what the Principal said, which is that the teacher decides pass/fail]. Mr. Kagawo was quite unable to explain how to get these symbols and the total and how to determine pass/fail.

Grade 3

Mr. Ngonde said that to get the final symbol the three terms' symbols count equally. For instance, if a learner gets a C, D, and F for the three terms, the learner passes the subject. Mr. Ngonde uses the wrong scale for relating percentages to symbols. For instance, he has 34 - 37% as D rather than F, and 53% as a B rather than a D. In Term 1 of 1994 Mr. Ngonde had 41 out of 54 learners passing (76%). Under MEC policy only 24 learners (44%) should have passed.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

Parents

Alfonsine Mwingi said that learners are responsible for reducing failure. Learners must study hard, especially those with "dry heads" who do not understand or concentrate.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Mr. Mudi is trying to change the way things are done in a school with many problems. As he pointed out, he can make only so many changes without having teachers refuse to do anything. Mr. Mudi "controls" the daily preparation books of the teachers in Grades 1 and 2 and tries to keep teachers from leaving school grounds to drink during school time. What happens, however, is that the Grade 1 and 2 teachers wait for the Principal to go to teach his lessons, then they go away to drink. The teachers were not drunk during our visit, but both the Grade 1 and 2 teachers and the HOD looked bleary-eyed and tired from years of drinking.

Having the former Principal as current HOD is very difficult for the school. It will be hard for the Principal to implement new ways of doing things with Mr. Kanyanga remaining in the school.

Between School and Community/parents

There are problems between the school and community. Before independence and under the former Principal, parents were not involved in the school. They seem to have little interest in the school at this point, and it is likely to take great effort to interest them in the school.

In many ways, Mr. Mudi is trying to get parents involved in the school. He is looking for funds to buy balls so that the school can have a soccer team, for example. In other ways, however, he may be pushing parents further from involvement in the school. For instance, Mr. Mudi will not send home school reports unless learners have paid the school fee. There are several problems with this strategy (not the least of which is that the school fund is not compulsory), including the fact that many parents may not expect reports anyway since they did not get them under the former school administration. Mr. Mudi may find it difficult to show that he is a better Principal than Mr. Kanyanga was, without campaigning and showing that he operates the school differently.

Between School and Regional Office

Mr. Mudi said that the Inspector comes by with documents and directives and says "do it," without giving guidance. Mr. Mudi said that the school needs more advice and assistance to be sure policy is implemented properly.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Clarify promotion subjects with school staff.

Discuss the importance of pass/fail, and raise the awareness of the school's changes in pass rates over time.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 11

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	33%	38%	67%
2	86%	100%	100%
3	71%	77%	96%

This school has great differences in pass rates between Grades 1 and 2. There is also a sizeable difference in pass rates between Grade 1 and 3. The question at this school was what explains the variation in pass rates, including the rise in Grade 1 pass rate from 1992 to 1993.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal	Mr. Shamate	9	2	27
Grade 1	Ms. Nankali	12	none	1
Grade 2	Mr. Matjayi	8	none	22
Grade 3	Mr. Shisisa	11	none	11

1. School setting/atmosphere

This school is less than 100 kilometers from Rundu. There are 8 teachers for about 450 learners in Grades 1 to 7. The medium of instruction is Rukwangali.

The Principal had received the letter announcing our visit and had asked the Inspector to tell us that just this year the school had gone to the platoon system. The Inspector had not mentioned that fact to us when we spoke with him.

Mr. Shamate and the teachers were very comfortable having us visit the school. The school is well-kept and learners seem respectful of teachers.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

Among the school staff, there is not much consideration of the causes of failure. Mr. Shamate, the Principal, said that since independence the pass rates have been high in Grades 1 to 3. Before independence the learners were not willing to work hard.

Mr. Matjayi, the Grade 2 teacher, said that learners fail because they are absent to look after cattle or hunt for food.

Parents

Willem Kasona said that maybe his Grandson failed Grade 2 twice because "he can't get things quick." Willem said that his Grandson is "the one who really likes school" and who says "that he doesn't know why he always fails."

Kapande Ukamba said that at this school many learners fail but she does not know why. Karoline Kandere also said that many learners fail in the lower grades at this school, because they are absent a lot. [This view of high failure rates in Grade 1 is consistent with the evidence, but not for Grades 2 and 3].

Last year, Natalie Katura's daughter failed Grade 1 because "she did not know what is education" and she was "too small." Young learners fail because they do not concentrate in class, but only play.

Learners

Makena, who is in Grade 1 for the second time, said that learners fail because they dodge classes and miss exams. She thinks she failed because she missed a lot of school to pound mahongo for her Grandmother.

Maria, who is 10 years old and in Grade 1, said that she does not know why she failed last year. She added that not many learners fail at the school.

Reinhard, who is 9 years old and doing Grade 2 for the second time, said that he failed the year because he failed English. He also missed a lot of school to tend his father's goats and cattle. This year, his father looks after the animals himself.

Lukrentia, who is 13 years old and in Grade 2, said that learners fail because they do not pay attention to the teacher.

Melania, who is 15 years old and in Grade 3, said that few learners fail at the school and that those who fail are not able to write or count.

Jakop, who is 12 years old and in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they do not listen to the teacher and they are absent.

Placing Blame for Failure

Ms. Nankali, the Grade 1 teacher, said that sometimes the learner is responsible for failure, or the parents if they do not care whether the learner comes to school.

Parents

Parents consider learners responsible for failure. Willem Kasona said that the teacher said his Grandson is responsible for his own failure because the teacher teaches "what I am supposed to teach, he just does not get it." Willem agreed that it is the learner who is responsible for failure because teachers are teaching what they know. He added that "parents just accept what teachers say" about passing and failing.

Kapande Ukamba said that the responsibility for failure is the learner's, for not learning hard.

Learners

Makena, who is in Grade 1, said that parents say failure is the child's fault.

Reinhard, a learner in Grade 2, said that his teacher consoled him when he failed Grade 2, saying that he would pass the next year. His parents said they would be happy with him if he tried hard to learn and passed the next year.

Lukrentia, who is in Grade 2, when asked whose fault failure is, said that sometimes the learner is at fault for being quiet and not knowing how to read. But there is also the problem of learners not having a place to write their homework.

Melania, who is in Grade 3, said that it is the learner's own fault for failing.

Jakop, a learner in Grade 3, said that some learners say that they fail because teachers are doing nothing and that they do not teach well. Parents also say the teachers are not teaching well and that is why children fail.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed

Those Who Pass Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mr. Shamate said he is pleased with pass rates since independence. He said that he is satisfied with the school's pass rates and so are the teachers.

In Term 1 of 1994, 22 out of 57 learners (39%) passed in Ms. Nankali's Grade 1 class. She said that she expects some to improve by the end of the year but that in Term 1 "many are still blind." She said that if all the learners in a class passed she would think there was good cooperation between teachers and learners, that "all must be giving their hearts."

In Mr. Matjayi's Grade 2 class in Term 1 of 1994, 42 out of 64 learners (66%) passed. He said that some learners' behaviour has improved in the second term, so he expects them to pass. Mr. Matjayi guessed that maybe 50 (78%) would pass at the end of the year. He said he would be satisfied with that number passing.

Mr. Shisisa, the Grade 3 teacher, expects 22 out of 27 learners (81%) to pass. He added that the other learners are not coping with the work, even with special lessons he gives them. In Term 1 of 1994, Mr. Shisisa passed 26 out of 30 learners (87%). [See the section on Symbols and Percentages and determining pass/fail for a correction of the number of learners passing Term 1].

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Mr. Shamate said that it once happened at the school that all the learners in a class passed. He said that that was the first time he had seen that happen. He does not know how it happened, but that it must have happened because both teacher and learners worked hard.

Ms. Nankali, a Grade 1 teacher, said that it is not possible for a whole class to pass. "Some learners are really stupid, some dodge, so the only thing is for them just to fail." Ms. Nankali said that she had not heard of all the learners passing at this school [this is her second year teaching there, so she was at the school in 1993 when all the Grade 2 learners passed].

Asked whether it is possible for all the learners in a class to pass, Mr. Matjayi, the Grade 2 teacher, said that it is not possible this year because families do not have enough food. He said it did happen that all the learners in Grade 2 passed last year.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Shamate said that parents are unaware of what is happening in the school. They do not visit the school to ask how their children are doing. He said that they may be uninterested because they lack information about school or do not know that school is important. Parents receive reports but may not read them, sometimes because they are illiterate. Their children miss school and when the teacher goes to the parents to find out why, parents say that "it's not our fault, we don't know why they don't go to school." Other parents keep children out of school to do work.

Mr. Shamate, looking at minutes from a meeting, said there is a School Committee that meets once a term to discuss things like the platoon system, temporary structures to be built, and the behaviour of learners and teachers.

Parents

Willem Kasona said that he comes to parents meetings to discuss learner absenteeism. He has also come to school to watch lessons. Everything was fine in the class.

Annastasia Ngindu has been invited to parents meetings but missed them because of illness. She does not know whether there is a School Committee.

Kapande Ukamba has also come to the school for meetings. At the last meeting they discussed building a new building. Because she lives far inland, Karoline Kandere had not visited the school until the day she met with the research team.

Relationship with Principal and Teachers

Ms. Nankali said she asks the learners in her class whether their parents are interested in their school work and they say no. Few parents can read.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mr. Shamate, the Principal, said that there are no underage learners in the school. Parents try to send young ones but the school refuses.

Ms. Nankali, the Grade 1 teacher, said that learners who are too young (under age 6) are sent home by the Principal. She added that it is okay if learners know nothing when they arrive at school because they have no kindergarten to prepare them for school.

Mr. Shisisa, the Grade 3 teacher, said that some learners are not ready for Grade 3 because they are underage or overage. He said of some of the learners that "you have the sense that they never went to school." Mr. Shisisa said "I just accept" the situation because it is the Principal's job to deal with these problems.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Makena and Maria, who are both in Grade 1, said that they take books home. Makena studies by herself and Maria gets help from her Aunt.

Reinhard, a learner in Grade 2, takes books home and studies with his brother's help. Lukrentia, who is in Grade 2, does not have writing books to take home. Sometimes she talks with her sister about what she is doing in school, but Lukrentia cannot do this very often because her sister lives in Rundu.

Melania, a learner in Grade 3, takes books home and is assisted by her brother, who is in Grade 6. Her parents cannot read. Jakop, who is also in Grade 3, takes books home and studies by himself.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

Ms. Nankali said that to pass Grade 1, learners must know greetings, things in the class and parts of the body in English. In Kwangali, learners must know the alphabet and words like "tate." In Maths, learners must be able to count from 1 to 10; add numbers up to 20 (10 + 9); and divide numbers up to 10 (such as 10/2). [Note that Ms. Nankali expects learners to do division in Grade 1, while the Grade 2 teacher does not expect learners to do division].

Mr. Matjayi said that to pass Grade 2 learners must be able to do the following: in Kwangali, spell and read words like "nane" and "tate" and use them in sentences; in English, read and write the greetings and words like "mother" and "father;" and in Maths, count from 1 to 20, do addition and subtraction and multiplication with numbers from 1 to 12.

Mr. Shisisa said that to pass Grade 3 learners must be able to write words and sentences (much like those listed by the Grade 2 teacher) in Kwangali and English. Mr. Shisisa listed no basic competencies in Maths.

Teaching Methods
These comments are based on classroom observations and interviews.

Asked how the Grade 1 teacher handled 127 learners last year and the Grade 2 teacher manages over 60 learners this year, the Principal said that each teacher was "not teaching, just struggling." Teachers need to have few enough learners to involve them all in lessons, or do group work, which teachers have not been trained to do.

Grade 1: Maths lesson

In the room there are 7 benches. There are 4 learners to a bench and about 16 learners sitting on the floor. Most learners pay attention and there is a friendly class atmosphere. The teacher seems to enjoy teaching.

Ms. Nankali draws circles with circles inside to illustrate addition (5 + 2, 3 + 2). An individual learner answers and another learner goes to the board to write in the numbers beneath the sets. The learners called on do quite well at answering questions.

Two benches at the back have boys who are very quiet and who look uncomprehending. They get none of the teacher's attention. Most learners do not have exercise books. Two learners come in fifteen minutes late. The teacher makes no comment.

The teacher tells learners to do the assignment on the board:

$$2 + 6 =$$
$$3 + 4 =$$
$$2 + 3 =$$

Most learners have no paper, so the teacher tears off small pieces of paper for them. Most learners have no pen or pencil. They wait for their classmates who have pencils to finish.

Learners look at one another's papers. The teacher marks a few books. One girl gets 1 out of 3 correct. The teacher puts a check mark next to the correct answers and "α" next to all the incorrect answers. She shakes her head at the girl who got 1 out of 3 correct. Another girl gets all 3 problems right. The two benches of boys do nothing and the teacher does not say anything to them.

The correct answers are given by the teacher and the lesson ends.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Mr. Shamate said that methods of assessment have not changed since independence. The school still uses tests at the end of terms 1 and 2 and an exam at the end of Term 3 to decide promotion. The Principal had not heard of CA.

Ms. Nankali, the Grade 1 teacher, said that she has had no training or workshops in assessment, but that she was taught by other teachers how to do it. In oral assessment, learners who talk freely get more marks than learners who are shy. Ms. Nankali said she is comfortable with assessment and has no problems with it. Learners take exams at the end of the term.

Mr. Matjayi, the Grade 2 teacher, had two one-week workshops in assessment in which he was taught to give a learner marks every time he does something in class. Mr. Matjayi said, "I do not just wait for the term end." Mr. Matjayi said that these workshops were not in CA, which was training given only to Principals. The current Principal, Mr. Shamate, did not go to the CA workshop, but the previous Principal did.

Mr. Matjayi said that the purpose of CA is to act "like a witness for you," to show the parents of a learner how the learner did throughout the year. In promotion decisions CA marks are not used. He added, echoing the Principal, that there had been no changes in assessment procedures since Independence.

Mr. Shisisa, the Grade 3 teacher, has had in-service training in English and Sport, but no training in assessment. He said that the staff does not discuss assessment in school meetings.

Exams Circulars

The most recent NIED circular the school has is NIED 42/93, according to Mr. Shamate. He described instructions for the completion of Exam Schedules in Annex C of the document. Mr. Shamate said that the circulars are hard to understand. The Inspector helps the Principal understand circulars such as NIED 42/93.

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, and Learner Work

Ms. Nankali has no syllabi for Grade 1. The Scheme of Work she has was left by the previous teacher of Grade 1. The Scheme covers all the subjects except for English. In English, Ms. Nankali uses *Our Own Reader* and NAMPEP materials such as posters.

Mr. Matjayi has no syllabi. He does have a Scheme using old information from perhaps 10 years ago. The old Scheme was based on MEC information and he just copies it over and over year after year.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy at the time: Medium of Instruction, Maths, handwriting.

None of the teachers correctly listed the promotion subjects because they included English in the list. Mr. Shamate listed the promotion subjects as Kwangali, English, Maths and handwriting.

Ms. Nankali listed the promotion subjects as Kwangali, English, Maths and handwriting. Ms. Nankali said she knows that English is a promotion subject because it is listed as one on the Exam Schedule sent to the school from the MEC.

After some hesitation, Mr. Matjayi also said the promotion subjects are Kwangali, Maths, handwriting, and English.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

Mr. Shisisa correctly listed the promotion subjects as Rukwangali, English, Maths and handwriting.

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Shamate said that teachers have a scale of percentages to determine symbols. Both the Grade 1 and 2 teachers include English as a promotion subject, which is not consistent with MEC policy.

Grade 1

Ms. Nankali said that she gets symbols by adding together reading, oral and writing scores from exams. Ms. Nankali "sometimes" keeps records of the work learners do in class. She uses these marks only if a learner is sick during exams, in which case she adds some marks from the term to his score. She was not able to be more specific about how she uses these marks.

Ms. Nankali said that learners may fail English and still pass if they pass the other three subjects. If a learner fails Rukwangali he fails the year. When asked whether the total is important, she said no. She added that "we don't do" percentages, but then said that a learner must have 34 in the languages to pass. In handwriting, a learner must have 7/20 (35%) to pass. Other teachers explained this system to her. Clearly, Ms. Nankali does not understand what a percentage is and how to determine one.

In Term 1 of 1994, Ms. Nankali passed 22 out of 83 learners (27%), while under MEC policy, only 15 (18%) should have passed. Ms. Nankali actually passed 9 learners who should have failed, but also failed two learners who should have passed. It is difficult to figure out what criteria Ms. Nankali used in deciding pass/fail. She did not use the total percentage, as she passed some learners with low percentages. The deciding factor may be the inclusion of English as a promotion subject.

Grade 2

Asked how he determines pass/fail, Mr. Matjayi said that he sees who raises his hand in class because he is with the learners all the time. He knows which ones will fail -- the ones who never answer anything. He was unable to say more in answer to the question.

Later, Mr. Matjayi said that in order to pass, a learner must pass all the promotion subjects. He added that in the past English was not an important subject, but the Inspector said this year that English is a promotion subject. Mr. Matjayi said that 40% in individual subjects is passing and that the overall percentage is not important.

In Term 1 of 1994, Mr. Matjayi passed 37 out of 64 learners (58%). Using MEC policy the same number of learners should have passed, but 8 learners who should have passed were failed and 8 learners who should have failed were passed. It is difficult to figure out what criteria Mr. Matjayi used to decide pass/fail.

Grade 3

In Term 1 of 1994, Mr. Shisisa passed learners who had an F in Kwangali and passed some learners who failed two of the promotion subjects. He passed 26 out of 30 learners (86%), when by MEC policy, only 21 learners (70%) should have passed.

Condonation

Ms. Nankali said that some of the learners that the Inspector condones are not ready to go on to the next grade.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

Communication is not particularly good in the school. Mr. Matjayi, the Grade 2 teacher, when asked whether the Grade 3 teacher complained that any of the learners passed to the next grade were not ready for Grade 3, said that "He must just accept that the learners passed. We do not quarrel. My job is just to teach learners." Mr. Shamate, the Principal, confirmed that this exchange took place.

Mr. Shisisa, a Grade 3 teacher, said it is school policy made by the Principal that no teacher is allowed to visit another teacher's class during a lesson because it would leave "a negative impression" and the other teacher would feel uncomfortable and undermined in his work. He added that all teachers work individually, except in setting up the timetable.

Between School and Community/parents

The level and quality of communication between school and home seems far better than at other schools, though parents could be encouraged more strongly to get involved in the school.

Between School and Regional Office

The Principal said that he sees the Inspector frequently and that the Inspector often gives him advice, including help in understanding the circulars. If this is the case, either the Inspector needs to be clear on the fact that English is not a promotion subject in the lower grades, or the Principal needs to be sure he understands the advice. All in all, it seems that this school has fewer communication problems than other schools.

One factor in communication may be the frequency of the Principal's visits to Rundu. Several days before and during the school's exams week, the Lead Researcher met Mr. Shamate in Rundu. Perhaps he has developed good working relationships with the Regional Office staff by spending time in the Regional Office.

10. Recommendations

Changes Easy to Make

Change Exam Schedules so that they are in keeping with promotion policies.

RUNDU
SCHOOL 12

GRADE	1991 PASS RATE	1992 PASS RATE	1993 PASS RATE
1	46%	27%	28%
2	61%	74%	63%
3	88%	67%	91%

In all three years listed above, this school has great differences in pass rates between Grades 1 and 3. We sought to understand what beliefs and practices produced such widely differing pass rates at this school.

POSITION	NAME	ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION (YEARS)	YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	YEARS OF TEACHING
Principal and Grade 2	Mr. Mukuve	10	2	13
Grade 1	Mr. Nawangu	9 or less	none	12
Grade 3	Mr. Sintango	9 or less	none	17

1. School setting/atmosphere

This school is fewer than 100 kilometers from Rundu. There are four teachers for about 200 learners in Grades 1 through 4. The medium of instruction is Rukwangali.

When we arrived, learners were in class and the noise level was low -- even from the Grade 1 classroom, in which there were over 100 learners. All four teachers were in class and could be heard lecturing to the learners.

The Principal, Mr. Mukuve, had not received the letter from the research team and so was not expecting our visit. The Principal was comfortable with our visit once he understood our purpose at the school. The other three teachers joined us to find out what was happening and they too were pleased to help us with the study. In our initial meeting with the school staff, teachers discussed school problems (such as the fact that many learners speak Nyemba and not Kwangali at home), and points of confusion about how to implement CA. The atmosphere at the school was quite welcoming to the research team and to the learners.

2. Beliefs about and perceptions of Pass/Fail

Factors in Pass/Fail

Perceptions of Failure Rates and Why Learners Fail and Principals and Teachers Whose Children Have Failed

At first Mr. Mukuve said that he did not know why so many learners fail in Grade 1. He said that maybe half pass and half fail (72% failed in 1993). Later, Mr. Mukuve said that learners fail because Kwangali is hard for them and because the class is overcrowded (there are 106 learners in one Grade 1 class). None of the teachers speak Nyemba and many learners speak no Kwangali at home, so when they arrive at school the learners cannot understand anything the teachers say. By Grade 2, the Nyemba-speaking learners have learned enough Kwangali to get by, and by Grade 3 they are doing even better. These statements are supported by the improving pass rates in Grades 2 and 3.

Mr. Sintango, the Grade 3 teacher, said that two of his children have failed at this school. One of his daughters failed Grade 1 because she could not concentrate in an overcrowded class. His other daughter failed Grade 2 because she has problems with reading and writing. In general, learners fail because classes are overcrowded and learners do not pay attention.

Parents

Several of the parents interviewed knew that pass rates in Grade 1 are low at the school. Kusokasa Ndumba said that one of her children failed last year because "he does not get things quick." Learners in general fail because they do not learn particular subjects. Asked whether many learners pass or fail at this school, Kusokasa said "Those who know are those who know how to count. I don't know." When told that more learners fail Grade 1 than pass it, she said she does not know whether the teacher is teaching well or not.

Joel Gellasius said that many learners fail in Grade 1 and that they fail because they do not want to learn. He said that we should ask the teacher if we want to know why learners fail.

Martha Hausiku said that she hears from her children that few learners pass at the school. She also said that the teachers should know why learners fail. None of her children has failed a year but one failed last term. Her daughter said that she failed because she was absent too much. Martha's children miss school during the growing season.

Learners

Elike, who is 8 years old and repeating Grade 1, said that many learners fail Grade 1 because there are too many learners in the class. She does not know whether she will pass this year.

Fracisku, who is in Grade 2, said that learners fail because they cannot read or write and are absent. Sylvia, who is 11 years old and in Grade 2, agrees that learners fail because they cannot read and write.

Petrus, who is 19 years old and in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they do not study and miss school. Kunhilde, who is 15 years old and in Grade 3, said that learners fail because they do not understand what the teacher is teaching.

Placing Blame for Failure

Mr. Mukuve did not place blame for failure. He did say that some parents whose children have failed come to school and say, "We don't blame you because we know at home that our child is not good."

Mr. Sintango faulted neither his children nor the teachers for failure. He said that the teachers told him that the children had failed "somehow." No one seemed to blame the learners.

Parents

Soine Zorze said that she does not know how many learners pass or fail at this school. She does not know who is responsible for failure but speculated that maybe the Grade 1 teacher fails so many learners because he is tired of having so many learners in his class.

Learners

Elike, a learner in Grade 1, said that her father was quiet and angry because she failed. Sylvia, who is in Grade 2, said that parents are angry with children who fail.

Fracisku, a learner in Grade 2, said his parents blamed his failure on the teacher for not teaching well.

Petrus, who is in Grade 3, said that when children fail, parents fault them for not listening to the teacher. Kunhilde, a learner in Grade 3, said that parents get angry, saying, "You are just playing and not serious, that is why you failed."

The case of one learner, Kwelana

Soine Zorze said that her son Kwelana, who is 11 years old, was promoted to Grade 2, which he failed, and then was sent back to Grade 1. Soine said that the teacher made this decision, but she does not know why it was made. Soine said she was angry when this happened because although she did not attend school as a child, she knows that if a child fails, he stays in that grade and does not go back to a lower grade. She wanted to talk to the teacher but was afraid because "maybe that is how things happen in school." Her son was disappointed to be put back into Grade 1.

The Principal, Mr. Mukuve, is also the Grade 2 teacher. He is the one who decided that Kwelana was not doing well in Grade 2 and that maybe Grade 1 was more appropriate. Mr. Mukuve said that he had meant to talk with Kwelana's mother about the situation, but had not done so because she lives far from school [this statement is not consistent with what Soine Zorze said about where her home is]. Mr. Mukuve said that he did know how Kwelana passed Grade 1 the first time because he was not ready for Grade 2. Now Kwelana is the best learner in Grade 1.

The Exam Schedule for Grade 2 in 1993 shows that Kwelana got FF's in Kwangali, English, and handwriting, and a B in Maths. In Term 1 of 1994, in Grade 1, he got a D in Kwangali, D in English, A in handwriting, and A in Maths.

Mr. Nawangu, the Grade 1 teacher, said that Kwelana was sent back to Grade 1 because of problems in Kwangali. Kwelana did very well in all subjects except the medium of instruction. Mr. Nawangu said that he thought that Kwelana felt "okay" about being put back in Grade 1.

Kwelana said that he felt "very bad" about being put back into Grade 1 after having passed it once already. His parents were "just quiet" when they found out. He has no idea why he was returned to Grade 1. Kwelana expects to pass this year because he is learning hard.

Whether the Failure Rate Is Acceptable/Should Be Changed
Those Who Passed Term 1 and Numbers Expected to Pass this Year

Mr. Nawangu expects "maybe 20 or 30" learners to pass this year (20 out of 106 would be 19%; 30 would be 28%; these numbers are consistent with the percentages of learners passing Grade 1 in the past couple of years). Mr. Nawangu said that he is "not in favor of" so few learners passing and that 80 (75%) would be a better number. Mr. Nawangu has no idea whether the pass rates in Grades 2 and 3 are similar to those in Grade 1.

Mr. Sintango expects 22 out of 27 learners (81%) of the learners to pass this year. He said this number is not good, that he would be happy if all the learners passed. Mr. Sintango added that it is not good for learners to fail because they get older and will get tired of school and drop out.

Whether it Is Possible for All Learners in a Class to Pass

Mr. Mukuve said that neither the Inspector nor anyone else has ever said to him that all the learners in a class should pass, but that "we want everyone to pass." However, asked what he, as Principal and the Grade 2 teacher, would do if all the Grade 1 learners (106 of them) were to pass, Mr. Mukuve laughed. He said that would be unbelievable. He would "look into things to see what happened," and give another test to the Grade 1 learners "to see whether they really should have passed." Mr. Mukuve added that he knows some of the learners should not pass.

3. Parent Characteristics

Parental Involvement in School

Mr. Mukuve said there is a School Board with 3 parents and all 4 teachers on it. The School board "watches how teachers are teaching" and finds learners who are not in school. There are parents meetings at the beginning and end of each term to discuss problems. Mr. Mukuve said that parents care a lot about school, that "children don't understand the importance of education but parents do." The parents' interest in schooling is shown by the excellent enrolment and attendance at adult education programs held at the school.

Parents visit the school on their own to see how their children are doing. Mr. Mukuve said, "I like them to come."

Parents

Kusokasa Ndumba does not come to see what is happening at school, although she comes daily to sell fat cakes at break time. She has not observed any classes and said she would not want to. It is the job of the School Board to do that.

Soine Zorze came to a parents meeting once. She has heard of other meetings but has not come even though she lives near the school.

Joel Gellasius said he often visits the school because his brother is one of the teachers there. He attends parents meetings. One of the things discussed often in parents meetings is fighting between learners from Angola and those from Namibia. Joel said that he does not see the School Board do anything. The School Board should encourage learners to come to school but they do not do the job.

Martha Hausiku comes to the school for adult literacy classes. She does not go to parents meetings but knows that other parents attend.

4. Learner characteristics and views of school

Readiness and Underage Learners

Mr. Mukuve said that some learners start school at age 5 and estimated that "maybe 10 or 20" underage learners are in Grade 1 this year. He asked parents not to send underage learners but they continue to do so. Mr. Mukuve said that parents send underage children to school so the parents can go to work in the fields.

Mr. Nawangu, the Grade 1 teacher, said that many learners are 5 years old. Other learners bring their younger brothers and sisters to school. Asked whether he could do anything about these underage learners coming to school, Mr. Nawangu said, "I have nothing in mind." He added that it was fine for the young ones to come to school and listen, as an orientation for next year when they will be registered in Grade 1. He said that those learners who come with their brothers and sisters and register the next year are "the best learners" in the class.

Asked whether he knows of the MEC policy on age and school enrolment, Mr. Nawangu said that he had heard of it. He did not say whether he had thought of using the policy to limit class size, but it was clear that he had not considered doing so because he approves of learners coming to school before age 6.

Mr. Nawangu said that some learners are not ready for school. Those learners who are 3, 4 or 5 years old "just come and sleep and play and go home again." Mr. Nawangu's statements are somewhat inconsistent. It seems likely that he will not try to limit underage learners' attendance despite the fact that their presence crowds out learners of school-going age and disrupts the class.

Mr. Sintango said that it often happens that learners are not ready for Grade 3. Those learners who do poorly on a test he gives at the beginning of the year are not ready. This year he has four learners who are not ready in reading and writing Kwangali and English. Mr. Sintango encourages these learners to come to school and be serious.

Whether Learners Take Books Home and Get Help at Home

Elike (Grade 1) said that she has no books to take home. Her mother cannot read but her father can. She gets no help with school work, though sometimes Elike shows her parents what she has learned in Maths. Kwelana (Grade 1), also has no books to take home. His parents can read and sometimes he also shows them his Maths work.

Fracisku and Sylvia (both in Grade 2), take books home to study. Petrus (Grade 3), takes books home every day and studies with his brother, who is in Grade 7. He also studies with friends. Kunhilde (Grade 3), takes books home and studies daily with her Aunt.

Overcrowding

Asked whether he considers the fact that Grade 1 gets larger and larger as more learners come and many learners continue to fail, Mr. Mukuve said that "it is happening" and that all he can do is to "try to see that all learners pass."

Mr. Nawangu, the Grade 1 teacher, said that he is "uncomfortable" teaching such a crowded class. Learners go home and complain to their parents that they raise their hands to answer questions in class but never get the chance.

Asked what he thinks the Principal would say if all the learners passed in Grade 1 this year, Mr. Nawangu said he did not know, but that the school would have to find another Grade 2 teacher to handle all the learners. Mr. Nawangu acknowledged that next year, with repeaters and new learners, Grade 1 is likely to be even bigger than it is this year.

Attendance and Pass Rates

Mr. Nawangu, the Grade 1 teacher, said of his class of 106 learners and their younger siblings, "It is lucky that most don't turn up."

In Grade 1 attendance is excellent, with at most 10 out of 106 learners per day absent (9%). Few learners are absent frequently, so there is no relationship between pass/fail and attendance.

In Grade 2, usually 8 out of 29 learners (28%) are absent daily. All the learners miss about the same amount of school. In Grade 3, 5 or 6 learners out of 20 in the register are absent daily (25 - 30%), and some learners miss 2 or 3 days a week. There does not seem to be a relationship between attendance and pass fail, looking at the CA records.

5. Quality of educational experience
Relationship between what is taught and assessed

Basic Competencies

Mr. Nawangu said that to pass Grade 1 learners must be able to read words and sentences fro "Turondeni" ("Let's go up") and read the letters in the alphabet. In Maths the learners must know the four operations up to 10. Then Mr. Nawangu said that learners had to be able to count only up to 5. They must also know the shapes.

None of the other teachers listed basic competencies.

Teaching Methods
These comments are based on classroom observations.

Grade 1: English lesson

Over 100 learners are present. There are about 40 chairs and 20 desks. Learners sit two to a chair and sit on desks and on the floor. At least 10 children younger than age 6 are in the class. The room is stiflingly hot.

The teacher says, "Yes, it is English language time." The teacher asks "What is this?" about a ruler, a book, a table, the door, a window, the chalkboard, a chair, the wall, a duster and the floor. Learners answer as a group and as individuals. The teacher often says "Thank you" to a child who has answered correctly.

In spite of the unbearable overcrowding, most of the learners seem to be paying attention. The teacher asks, "Who can point me the book?" The teacher writes "b-o-o-k" on the board. When he reads the letters, he says "oo" (like the sound in "true") for the letter "o."

The lesson ends, with perhaps twenty learners having answered questions individually.

Grade 3: Maths

The Principal told us that the Grade 3 and 4 teachers trade classes during Maths because the Grade 4 teacher has a problem with Maths. In this lesson, then, we watched the Grade 4 teacher teaching the Grade 3 class.

The class uses Mathematika 3. There is one book for every 2 or 3 learners. There are 25 learners in the class. There is no shortage of space.

The teacher writes exercises from the book on the board. He quickly goes through the answers to 1 x 4 and 2 x 4. Then he erases the board and writes:

4 x 4 =
5 x 4 =
6 x 4 =
7 x 4 =
8 x 4 =
9 x 4 =
10 x 4 =

16/4 =
20/4 =
24/4 =
28/4 =
32/4 =
36/4 =
40/4 =

The teacher calls on some learners twice. Learners had many problems. One said 28/4 = 9. Another learner said 7/4 = 8. A third learner said 8/4 = 8.

When a learner said 9 x 4 = 24, the teacher said, "No, it's not 24...." The teacher was quiet, then looked in his book for a moment, and said "it's 36." It was clear that the teacher did not know the answer.

6. Source of information on curriculum and assessment
Standardisation of basic competencies

Methods of Assessment and Training in Assessment

Soon after our arrival, the Principal brought out a CA form and asked how to get the group average from the group total, which is one of the sections on the CA form the school was given. The teachers and Principals sat close to us and watched how to get the average. The Principal was called to a Principal's workshop in CA in Rundu last year. No teachers were invited.
Mr. Mukuve was critical of CA, saying that the teachers would like to do assessment through writing too, and wonder why they cannot use writing in CA. He said that CA makes it much more difficult for learners to go on to the next Grades. The Principal was told that there should be no writing in assessment for Grades 1 to 3.

Mr. Mukuve said that to him CA is giving marks for all the things done in class. The teacher asks questions after teaching, instead of waiting for exams. Sometimes teachers teach one week and assess the next week. Teachers call in learners one by one to ask them questions. The symbols come from exams unless a learner is sick for exams.

Mr. Nawangu, the Grade 1 teacher, said that he thinks the purpose of CA is to have a guarantee whether the learner passed or failed and to show the teacher where a particular learner's problems are. He said that promotion is based mainly on the exam but also on CA. Mr. Nawangu does CA by dividing the class of 106 into four groups. He chooses two learners, one girl and one boy, one doing well and the other badly, from each group, and assesses those learners. He chooses different learners each time. To get marks for the rest of the learners in each group, he makes "an assumption" about where they are relative to the learner doing well and the one doing poorly, and then gives a mark.

Mr. Sintango, the Grade 3 teacher, said that marks come from oral tests given at the end of the year.

Exams Circulars

The school has NIED 42/93.

Syllabi, Schemes of Work, and Learner Work

Mr. Mukuve said that Grades 1 and 2 have no syllabi, nor do they have exercise books. Grade 3 has a Scheme of Work made up last year.

Mr. Nawangu gets his information for his Scheme from texts only.

Textbooks

In Grade 2, Mr. Nawangu does not have enough Mathematika texts for the learners so he does not use them at all.

7. Determining Pass/Fail

Promotion Subjects: Grades 1 and 2
MEC policy: Kwangali, Maths, and handwriting.

Mr. Mukuve said that the promotion subjects for Grades 1 to 3 are Kwangali, English and Maths. The source of information on this is the Inspector.

Mr. Nawangu said that the Principal told him that the promotion subjects are Maths, English and Kwangali.

Promotion Subjects: Grade 3

Mr. Sintango said that the promotion subjects for Grade 3 are English, Maths and Kwangali. [Policy at the time listed handwriting also as a promotion subject.].

Percentages, Symbols, and Deciding Pass/Fail Based on Them

Mr. Mukuve said that all subjects count in deciding pass/fail. The most attention is given to English, Kwangali and Maths. Looking at the Exam Schedule for his class, Mr. Mukuve was unable to explain why some learners passed and others failed.

At this school, it is unclear how the learners are actually assessed (there are no test books or records of assessment, for example).

Grade 1

Mr. Nawangu said that if a learner fails a language, he fails the year. However, in Term 1 of this year, he passed learners with the following symbols [note: English is included here because the teacher considers English a promotion subject although that is not in keeping with MEC policy]:

LEARNER	KWANGALI	ENGLISH	MATHS	HANDWRITING	PASS/FAIL
Patrick	FF	FF	D	C	P
Birgitha	FF	FF	E	E	P
Krishne	FF	F	FF	F	P
Simbona	FF	FF	E	E	P
Sikerete	FF	F	F	C	P

In the class, only 4 learners did not get F or FF in Kwangali. Only 9 did not get F or FF in English. 22 did not get F or FF in Maths and 38 did not get F or FF in handwriting. These consistently low symbols in the languages support the Principal's statement that learners have great difficulty in the languages but do much better in the other subjects.

Grade 2

In his CA records, Mr. Mukuve listed the following symbols and promotion decisions for Term 1 of 1994:

LEARNER	KWANGALI	ENGLISH	MATHS	HANDWRITING	PASS/FAIL
Kaundu	F	E	D	C	P
Eliakim	E	F	FF	E	F
Hawina	E	E	FF	F	F
Johanna	E	E	FF	E	F

According to MEC policy at the time, Kaundu should have failed, and Eliakim and Johanna should have passed. Apart from these errors, the promotion decisions in Mr. Mukuve's class of 29 learners are correct.

Grade 3

In Grade 3, out of 19 learners on the Exam Schedule, only 1 learner failed. The teacher made one error in a promotion decision, passing a learner who failed Kwangali, English, and Maths, and got a C in handwriting. To pass this learner, Mr. Sintango must have included the other subjects on the Exam Schedule (Environment, Bible, Art, Physical Education and Music) in the promotion decision.

Condonation

Mr. Sintango said that in the middle of the year the Inspector decided that six overage learners should be promoted from Grade 2 to 3. Mr. Sintango is unhappy with the decision because the learners are not doing well.

8. Interviewees' ideas on how to raise the number of learners passing

The only suggestion Mr. Mukuve had for raising the number of learners passing was to get another teacher for Grade 1.

Mr. Sintango, the Grade 3 teacher, said that the way to reduce failure is for teachers to "treat [learners] like their own children" and to help learners concentrate.

9. Cooperation, Coordination, and Communication

Within School

The four teachers at the school seem to work together very well. They discuss learners, as in the case of Kwelana, the Grade 2 learner sent back to Grade 1, even if their decisions may not be in keeping with MEC policy. Mr. Mukuve, the Principal, said that his relations with the teachers are very good. Teachers are punctual, but sometimes do not have lessons prepared in advance.

Mr. Sintango said that teachers sometimes ask one another for advice. For example, he was having problems teaching multiplication and a colleague showed him another method -- using drawings to give learners a better understanding of multiplication. Mr. Sintango also said that he watched Mr. Nawangu teach a Grade 1 class last year.

Between School and Community/parents

The relations between the school and parents are friendly, but there is not a strong family or community involvement in the school. There are many instances, such as the case of Kwelana, when neither the learner nor his parents know what is happening and why.

Between School and Regional Office

Mr. Mukuve said that the Inspector comes when he has a message to deliver or some form to fill out on the school and when he is finished he leaves. Once a year the Inspector looks at attendance registers and learners' books and watches classes.

After we told the Principal what the promotion subjects were according to MEC policy, he said that all Principals should be given this information. When Mr. Mukuve goes to the Inspector for advice, instead of being assisted by the Inspector, Mr. Mukuve is sent to the nearest school for help or the necessary forms. Mr. Mukuve said that those schools cannot help him because they have the same problems. He added, "Most of our work is on our own."

Another problem is that while other schools are invited to various workshops, his school is not invited. No one tells Mr. Mukuve what went on at the workshops. Some materials may be left for him at a neighboring school and he is expected to pick them up.

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